

USELESS WOMEN. SEE PAGE 88.

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RANDAL SEYMOUR'S ATONEMENT.

A WELCOME SPECTRE

[A NOVELETTE.]

(Complete in this No.)

CHAPTER I.

QUENIE more read me the letter through, Ruth. Until I listen to that again I cannot realise all that has happened, and all that is going to happen."

"Indeed, sister, I am in the same plight," said Miss Ruth Desborough, smoothing out a much-crumpled letter, and glancing in a bewildered way at her sister over her spectacles before she began.

Miss Mary, the elder of the two benevolent-

faced spinsters, nodded her head sympathetically, and taking up her knitting prepared to listen. Miss Ruth, seeing this, turned her eyes to the letter in her hand, and proceeded to read it. It ran thus:—

"Dear Aunts,—Your loving, considerate letter in answer to mine, telling you of my poor father's death, has filled my heart with delight. With warmest feelings of gratitude I accept your invitation to Beryl and myself. We sail by the next steamer from New York, and shall thus be with you soon after this letter reaches you. A Mrs. Fairfax, a friend who crosses at the same time, has promised to look after us. Also we shall be guarded by her son, a young doctor who attended dear dad in his last illness. As a rule, I rather scorn the help of men, but I shall not be

sorry to have him as escort, for Beryl is so very, very delicate, and he understands her so well. He—as it happens—has bought a practice close to Grassdene, so will be able to bring us all the way.—With heartfelt thanks and love, I am always your loving niece,

"RUBY DESBOROUGH."

"Ah!" ejaculated Miss Mary, "poor, dear girls! and Beryl so delicate! Dear! dear! Well, sister, we must do our best to console them for the loss of their devoted father—our dear brother!"

"Yes! yes! poor Philip!" cried Miss Ruth, tenderly. "Little did we think when he and his sweet young wife set sail for America that they would never come back! Ah, poor children! poor orphaned girls! we will, indeed, do our best to comfort them!"

Could the girls they spoke of have seen the sweet, kindly old faces of the silvery-haired spinsters, they would, indeed, have felt glad, for the fine, kindly, old faces told a very plain tale of the generous, loving hearts that beat beneath the simple grey gowns.

All their lives the Misses Desborough had lived in the old grey-stone house that, surrounded by noble trees, stood at the head of the village green.

Their father had been the favourite doctor for miles round, and on his death—knowing that his only son had prospered well in the great city of New York—he had left a modest two hundred a-year to his old-maid daughters, Mary and Ruth.

This evening Philip's daughters were expected, and by-and-by the little spinsters would put on their bonnets and walk away to the tiny station to meet the two unknown nieces.

In the dining-room a tempting tea was laid. Margaret—the old servant, quite as excited as her mistresses—had brought out all her greatest delicacies to do honour to the occasion.

Delicate slices of rosy ham, fresh eggs of a rich brown hue, home prepared honey, crisp, delicious-looking cakes, and preserves of all kinds helped, with the snowy cloth and shining glass and silver, to make the table look very pretty and attractive.

And now the Misses Desborough were waiting nervously, eagerly, until it should be time to meet these nieces.

"Here comes Saxon!" exclaimed Miss Mary, putting down her knitting with an air of relief as a quick, firm step sounded on the gravel, and a rich tenor voice was heard emphatically announcing the singer as "a wandering minstrel."

By-and-by the window was pushed open by a lay hand. A young man stepped leisurely into the rose-scented room, and, after saluting the ladies in gallant style, threw himself into a tempting-looking basket chair.

He was a tall, dark young fellow, not positively good-looking, and certainly by no means plain; merry brown eyes, a large, laughing mouth, a nondescript nose, rough, wavy hair, a vigorous, loosely-built figure—all these, I say, made up a *total ensemble* perhaps far more fascinating than if he had possessed all the graces of an Apollo; and there was not one of the many maidens living in and around Grassdene who would not willingly have entrusted herself to the keeping of the young Squire.

For Cardew of Cardew Manor was undeniably a good catch, and being alone in the world—with the exception of a young sister of fifteen—one would have thought he might be easily caught.

But no. The Grassdene girls were wont to declare, in somewhat vexed tones, that they believed Saxon Cardew had a heart of stone! And, indeed, he seemed wedded to his estate, his little wild sister, and the Misses Desborough. He certainly was devoted to the little spinsters, and in return the old maids loved him fondly, ever welcoming him with flattering warmth, and considering the laughing, clean-shaven face, with its ominously firm lips, as the handsomest in all the world.

"Not come yet?" he inquired, lazily, yet with a certain quick, anxious light in his dark eyes.

"Oh, no!" cried Miss Ruth, promptly, though she glanced at the clock as she spoke, "we shall not leave here for quite half-an-hour."

"Ah," ejaculated the young man, and fell into a brown study.

"How is Bel?" mildly inquired Miss Mary, glancing benevolently at her favourite, and deciding that it must be the extraordinary heat of the September day that made him look so worried and fagged.

"Oh, she's well enough!" he said, with a short laugh, "but the long-suffering Miss Johnson demanded to see me this morning."

She distinctly refuses to instruct Miss Cardew any longer, so Bel is on the rampage at present.

Miss Ruth smiled, and yet she sighed. "I'm afraid you'll have to send her to school, Saxon."

"No," said Saxon, firmly, "I shall not do that!"

"Well, then, get married," softly remarked Miss Mary.

"Find me a wife, then!" retorted the young man, coolly; then provokingly, "who can I love?"

Miss Mary shook her head, and glanced hastily at her sister. Then, as though a strange idea had spontaneously assailed them, the spinsters grew suddenly very silent and solemn. Saxon, leaning back in his comfortable chair, watched them keenly; and, as though guessing their thoughts, began to talk of the subject that lay nearest to their hearts.

"Do you know," he said, slowly, "I met a fellow to-day who knew your nieces well, or, at least, all about them? He was on the eve of returning to New York, and had not much time."

"He told you that he knew our nieces?" they exclaimed simultaneously, their grey eyes sparkling, a faint tint stealing into their faded cheeks.

"Yes," said Saxon, very gravely, rising and leaning against the mantelpiece. Then in queer, abrupt tones, "May I tell you a little tale, dears, before you go to the station?"

His grave tones frightened them, but Miss Ruth plucked up her courage, and answered hastily:

"Yes, tell us at once!"

"Well, you know this much, that after the death of his idolized wife your brother grew to hate New York, and so sold up everything, and, accompanied by his two daughters, went off to California. A few gentlemen were at the Fields; and Mr. Desborough, glad to meet his equals sometimes, fell into the way of welcoming any gentleman who arrived, and even of inviting them to his big, wooden shanty, and introducing them to his daughters. One especially, an Englishman, Randal Seymour by name, your brother took a great fancy to, though from the first the girls had detested him. He was only too glad to accept the old man's invites, for he had fallen deeply in love with the beautiful elder sister—Beryl, I believe, her name."

"She, as I said, hated this Seymour; and, when he proposed to her, firmly refused him. At the time he seemed to accept her answer with admirable resignation; yet, even at the minute she said no, he was plotting hard to get her into his power. He seized the chance one afternoon when Mr. Desborough was out, working in his chime. The younger sister was lying down, suffering from a headache, and Beryl was wandering outside their quarters, gathering flowers. Softly he stole up behind her, flung a heavy cloak over her head, and rushing to his horse, which was in readiness, leaped on to it, and flew off at a tremendous pace."

"Oh, terrible! terrible!" cried Miss Mary, in deeply shocked tones. "And the darling girl. Was she saved?"

"Yes. Luckily she had with her a tiny terrier which, alarmed by Seymour's sudden appearance, set up a tremendous barking. This, fortunately, aroused the younger sister. She sprang to the window just in time to see the villain disappearing, with her sister in his grasp. In a minute she had rushed outside, and, lifting a whistle to her lips, summoned her father and his men to her assistance. Hardly any time was lost; almost at once they were in pursuit, and gaining on the heavily-burdened horse. Seymour turned at the thud of the horses' hoofs caught his ear, and, seeing he would surely be taken if he kept the girl, he lowered her to the ground, and, dashing out of sight, eluded them completely."

"And she was saved?" queried Miss Ruth, with a relieved sigh.

"Yes, saved; but now comes the saddest part of the tale. When her father reached her side, and lifted her tenderly in his arms, she was quite unconscious. For weeks she alternated between heavy stupors and wild delirium; and, when at last she passed out of this state, they found that her reason to a certain extent was affected—the shock and terror had destroyed her memory, leaving her as a little simple child. Filled with horror, the father took her to New York, and consulted all the eminent doctors, but in vain.

"They were all agreed on one point. A shock equally terrible as that which had destroyed her reason, or even the sudden sight of the villain who had done his best to wreck her life, might recall the vanished memory. Still the case was almost a hopeless one. It was grief at his darling's hard fate which had killed your brother; and another melancholy thing is that the young doctor who accompanies them has fallen in love with his poor young patient, and it is for love of her, and in the hope of curing her, that he has deserted America, and come over here."

"Oh!" cried Miss Mary, in saddened tones, "the pity of it all!"

"Yes, it's a melancholy tale," responded Saxon, gravely; "and what makes it sadder is that it's so hopeless, for Beryl will certainly never set eyes on Seymour again, he having been killed in a gambling saloon soon after."

Miss Ruth sighed heavily. "Ruby says in her letter that Beryl is very, very delicate," she remarked, slowly. "I suppose the poor, dear child would rather tell the tale than write it?"

"Most probably! And now I have saved her the pain of telling it!" cried Saxon, hastily. "Do you know I feel awfully sorry for them, but I am perfectly certain they are in luck's way now. If the poor girl could recover at all it would be when cared for by my gentle old friends."

The little spinsters positively blushed at this compliment from their boy.

"Well, we must go," cried Miss Ruth, suddenly. "There will be plenty to do at the station, and that poor young Ruby must be worn out and depressed with such a burden on her young shoulders."

Saxon smiled doubtfully.

"I don't think so," he said, slowly. "My informant told me that Miss Ruby had developed into the queerest, quaintest little lady—sometimes very, very grave, but mostly a cheery mortal—and this because the doctors said her merry ways were good for the invalid. I learned something more from him, too. He went on, comically, 'Ever since Seymour's vile attempt she looks on all men as cruel wretches! She utterly scorns them, and means to remain Miss Ruby Desborough, spinster, to her life's end.'"

The little old ladies laughed, but said nothing more. All their thoughts were on the meeting at the station, and Saxon, seeing this, bade them good-bye, and strode away.

"Ruth," said Miss Mary, slowly, as they started off to the station, turning her head as she spoke to gaze after Saxon's tall, retreating form, "that boy should be married."

"So he ought!" replied Miss Ruth, energetically. Then a little timidly, "Ah, Mary, if only they should fall in love with each other!"

"Yes, if they only would!" sighed Miss Mary; "but young folks are so contrary, sister."

"Not one bit more than we were at the same age," retorted Miss Ruth, briskly. "That's the mistake we old people make. Mary. We glorify our own generation, and consider that everything and everybody is inferior to the people and things of our own day."

Miss Mary's sweet old face broadened into a sunny smile at the lecture.

"You're right, Madame Wiseacre," she said, softly. "I shall worry myself no more, but leave all to Providence."

CHAPTER II.

"And so you see, Aunt Mary, we are quite penniless, and—and I must earn my own living!"

The speaker, a little, slight, childish girl, dressed in a simple black serge gown, folded her arms when she had finished, and nodded in laughing defiance at the two gentle spinsters.

Breakfast was just over, and all through that cheery meal a hot argument had been carried on between Ruby and the little aunts. She insisted that she could and should do something to add to their modest income now she and Beryl were come to live there.

"Poor dear dad left no money, and the sum obtained by the sale of the furniture only just paid our travelling expenses and bought our mourning!"

"But our purses are yours," cried Aunt Ruth, hastily. "Is it not so, Mary?"

"It is, indeed," began Miss Mary, solemnly; but her speech was stopped by a shower of impulsive kisses, and two loving arms were thrown round her neck, while a pair of glorious, flashing brown eyes looked straight into hers.

She was a strange, bright creature, this younger niece—sometimes deeply thoughtful, but oftener brilliant and cheery. Her small, oval, sunburnt face could boast of no regular features; and yet there was an infinite charm in the ever-changing expression of the face, with its funny, resolute mouth, and saucy little nose.

"It is not," she said, emphatically. "Is it not enough that you have extended a loving, sympathising welcome to me and my poor darling? Yet she and I must leave this longed-for haven if you will not allow me to help you—to work for my Beryl."

"What would you do, child?" queried Miss Mary, gently. "You would not like to leave your precious charge?"

"Ah, no!" the girl cried, hastily, a mournful look banishing the brightness from the radiant face. "I could never leave her—my sweet, helpless Beryl. My life is here, as you must know."

"Then what can you do, dear child?"

"Well, I should have liked to teach if I could only have had my pupil or pupils here. But that, I suppose, is impossible in this place—I mean, impossible to find a pupil."

One swift glance passed between the spinsters as they at once thought of Saxon's wild young sister on the rampage. Yet with wonderful wisdom they neither of them said anything, deciding quickly to leave it to chance.

"Well, have you nothing to suggest?" demanded the girl, with a sweet, low laugh. "No, I see you will not, you naughty old things! Never mind, I shall see for myself. Ha! here comes Dr. Fairfax already!" she exclaimed, as she ran over to the window and looked out. "How kind and good he is!" she said, in low, tremulous tones.

Miss Mary—who at the station the evening before had taken an immense fancy to the grave-faced young doctor—rose from the table, and hastily unfastening the window, beckoned smilingly to the newcomer, and he, catching sight of the little lady, came up to the window.

He was a man of magnificent stature and build, about thirty years of age, handsome in the extreme, and with a proud air about him that savoured more of the prince than the doctor. Intensely dark eyes shone out beneath the broad, intellectual forehead; and, together with a very well-shaped nose and a firm, beautiful mouth, just shaded by a dark moustache, gave Alan Fairfax the pre-eminence over many men in the point of good looks.

Now, as he entered, there was a very anxious expression in the dark eyes, and his first question—after he had greeted them all, and answered their inquiries after his mother—showed plainly what was his one all-absorbing thought.

"How is she this morning?" he asked, quickly.

"Just the same," answered Ruby, pulling nervously at a flower she held in her hand. "I am afraid she slept but little. I persuaded her to stay in her room for breakfast, but now you've come I'll bring her down."

"Stay! she is coming!" he said, swiftly, moving towards the door. "I—I know her step."

"Oh, doctor! is this wise? Will you not startle her if you suddenly appear before her?" whispered Miss Ruth, nervously.

Fairfax smiled, and the spinsters looking at him thought how sad that smile was.

"She is never surprised at anything now," he said, gravely. "Would to Heaven she were!" Then, with a little pathetic air of pride, "Besides, she knows me too well."

Scarcely had he spoken when the door opened slowly, and with hesitating steps Beryl Desborough entered the room.

"How lovely she is!" murmured Miss Mary, in tones of almost reverential awe, gazing earnestly at the graceful figure in its simple gown; at the fair, proud face, and the loosely rolled golden hair, that formed such a lovely, natural coronet on the small, stately head. "So fair a face!—such angel grace," and yet—Ah, the pity of it! In the exquisite, deep blue eyes was a strange, sad, vacant look, that only told too plainly of the vanished memory, the shattered mind.

"Alan!" she cried, gleefully, her eyes falling on his advancing figure. "Where did you come from?"

As she asked the question to which, as he knew well, she expected no answer, she slipped her thin fingers into his, with the confiding air of a little child, and let him draw her into the room.

"Ah; how grand they look together!" murmured impulsive Miss Ruth, a pitiful tone in her voice. "And see, Mary! the look he bends on her! What a noble, loving heart he must possess!"

"Yes, he is the one grand exception," said Ruth, abruptly, watching Fairfax instal Beryl in a low lounging chair. "Ah, yes, he is indeed good!"

"As are many men, dearest," ventured Miss Ruth, nervously.

"Ah, no!" retorted Ruby, with a very positive shake of her head. "You won't convince me, Aunt Ruth."

"I don't know about that," said Miss Ruth, in aggravating tones. Then, anxiously, "Ruby, darling, shall we leave Dr. Fairfax alone with Beryl?"

"Oh, yes, please! He has a strong influence over her, and often when she has had a bad night he reads her to sleep."

"Yes, she should have a rest," Dr. Fairfax said, thoughtfully, in answer to Miss Ruth's timid question. "I was sure she would have a bad night; and the dear old mother thinking the same begged me to ride over first thing, and do my best for the poor child."

"Then we won't stay another minute!" cried Miss Ruth, in a great flurry. "Mary! we have some shopping to do, and Ruby shall come with us."

But Ruby shook her little, dark head very decidedly at that proposition.

"If you will let me, dearest Auntie, I will explore your lovely garden rather than go out," she said, gravely. "I—I cannot bear to be away when Beryl may want me."

A troubled expression crept over the faces of the little spinsters. How very unequally cares and responsibilities seemed divided, they thought, in a perplexed way. They were middle-aged women, and yet their troubles had been few in number; while this little, childish girl of scarce eighteen, on the contrary, had already been called upon to battle with calamities of the heaviest nature!

Dr. Fairfax, sitting down by Beryl, and watching the ethereal face intently, looked up for a minute to speak for Ruby.

"Yes, let her go into the garden," he said, hastily. "She would only worry herself otherwise. I will call you, child, if Beryl does not

sleep; but I am almost sure she will if I read to her."

Quite cheered by his assured tone, the spinsters trotted away, with one last glance at Beryl's calm, pale face; while Ruby, her anxiety a little relieved by the doctor's presence, stooped and passionately kissed the sweet, delicate face; then springing out on the verandah, called to Jack, Miss Mary's tiny terrier, and flew away with him to explore the huge, old-fashioned garden.

As she rushed along, and felt the sweet, balmy, summer breeze caressing her forehead, her gravity vanished, and with a gay laugh she ran down the winding paths, stopping every now and then to sniff at some exquisite rose, and in the end tenderly gathering a pure white one, and fastening it in the breast of her gown. By-and-by, a little tired with her exertions, she dropped into a slower pace, and, musing as she walked, grew very grave again.

"Who is this hateful man, Jack?" she cried, suddenly, with an awful frown, "who seems to know all our history, and we, utter strangers? The aunts would not tell me when I asked; but I have guessed it is that Squire they talk so much about!"

Jack, seeing she was speaking to him, wagged his mite of a tail, and barking loudly to attract her attention, ran on before her through a low doorway into the kitchen-garden.

"Ha, gooseberries!" exclaimed the girl, clapping her hands, and, with an effort, vanishing her disagreeable thoughts. "I'll have some!" Headless of the unfriendly thorns, she gathered a large handful, and, climbing easily to the top of the iron railing that surrounded a small paddock, set to work to devour the spoil, while Jack rushed away to bark at a fierce-looking little pony, which was standing at the further end.

"A pony!" murmured Ruby, her eyes sparkling. "How I should like a ride!"

Jumping down hastily, and scattering the gooseberries on the ground, she ran forward: and cleverly catching at the pony's mane as he trotted past, with Jack barking at his heels, she sprang on to his back. The pony, utterly astonished, tossed his mane indignantly, and with an angry snort set off at a wild gallop round the field, doing his utmost meanwhile to dislodge his courageous little rider.

"No use, old fellow!" laughed the girl, as once more they approached the iron railing. "I shall take another fly round, as there's no one to—"

Suddenly the words died away; a deep, angry red flooded her cheeks, and she pulled up the enraged pony by its mane, and sat glaring at an apparition on the top of the fence.

A tall, thin, lanky girl of fifteen, clad in a scanty blue print gown, was perched on the railings, beaming in a friendly fashion at the bold rider, an expression of deep admiration on her plain, resolute, young face.

"How splendidly you ride!" she cried out, as Ruby dropped hastily from the pony, and sent it off with an impatient push. "How did you manage to stick on Spitfire?"

"Oh, it was easy enough," said Ruby, coldly, lifting her hands to smooth back the rebellious, dusky locks, which the wind had blown across her forehead. "I am an American girl, and have ridden all my life!"

"Have you?" eagerly. "How jolly! I've only just begun, and I suppose," with a huge sigh, "the next governess I get will tell Saxon she don't approve of it, or something else just as silly!"

Ruby looked up quickly and frowned, for she still felt cross at being caught.

"I don't know who you are!" she said, in icy tones, and with a very severe expression on her face.

The gawky girl looked at her piteously. "Oh, now I do believe you are vexed that we saw you riding!" she cried, penitently. "You see, we were coming up to Miss Mary about the governess, and, hearing Jack barking, we thought she might be in here. And,

really, Saxon only watched for a minute, and then went away; but I stayed to come in with you."

"Who is Saxon?" asked Ruby, sharply.

"My jolly old brother!" came the emphatic answer. "But, look here!" in hopeful tones, "You needn't mind; he thought you looked awfully nice!"

"Oh, I don't care!" said Ruby, haughtily. "The opinion of men is nothing to me! I suppose you are Miss Cardew?"

"Oh, don't call me that!" implored the child, jumping down, and slipping her hand into Ruby's. "I hate it!"

Ruby laughed.

"What then?" she said, presently, "what is your name?"

"Well, my other name is hateful too!" said the girl, slowly, "only I like what Saxon calls me. My real name—oh, please don't laugh at it—is Belinda! Saxon calls me Bel though, and you shall too!"

Ruby gave vent to a little, short laugh, but she said nothing, only walked quickly to the house, the fear assailing her that Saxon's sudden appearance might alarm and upset Beryl.

Entering the hall she paused a minute; then hearing voices in the drawing-room she drew Bel in there, and walked sedately over to Miss Mary, who was standing by the window, talking eagerly to Mr. Cardew. An introduction followed, Miss Mary being only too eager to make them known to each other.

But Ruby, resenting this young man's familiarity with their mournful history, was not to be cajoled into a genial frame of mind. There was a little, haughty bow from her, and a slight, careless glance. And all the time Saxon's generous impulsive heart was thrilling strangely within him, as he gazed fixedly at the dainty, brilliant face, with its disdainful, red lips. Still, resenting somewhat her hauteur, he managed to appear as cold as she, turning almost at once to Miss Mary with some question about the chance of finding a governess for Bel. Ruby stole away for a minute, but finding Beryl fast asleep, her hand tightly clasping the young doctor's, she came back to her aunt's side, and stood listening with secret eagerness to the governess' question.

"Would I do?" she said, suddenly, with startling abruptness. "I—I want some work to do, and if Bel would only come here I could teach her, I think."

Bel uttered a joyful exclamation, while Saxon wheeled round and stared at Ruby in such amazement that she felt herself colouring angrily.

"I should be very glad," he said, slowly, "And—Bel too," he added, hastily, with a great, sunny smile at the eager-faced lanky young sister.

"Then that's right," said Ruby, in intensely matter-of-fact tones. "Bel shall come to me to-morrow at ten. Aunt Mary, will you arrange with Mr. Cardew!" She bowed again to the astonished young man, and slipped away to Beryl's side, leaving him gazing after her in a bewildered fashion.

"What's the matter, Saxon?" asked Miss Mary, as Bel jumped out on to the verandah. "You look startled!"

"I am," he retorted, with another sunny smile. "Aunt Mary, I—I've lost my heart!"

CHAPTER III.

"Mr. Cardew, please go away. I want Bel to finish her French exercise, which she certainly will not do if you stand at that window."

It was Ruby who made this severe remark. She was frowning severely at Saxon Cardew, who had come up to the open window, and, leaning his arms lazily on the sill, was looking with open, candid admiration at the slight, young governess in her sombre gown, which set off the arch, bright face so well.

It was now some weeks since the arrival of the two orphans. Ruby, loved and petted by the gentle little spinster aunts, had been very happy during those weeks, though Beryl was

still in the same state of mind, reminding everyone around her of a lovely, docile child.

The kindly-faced rotor strolled in every day to sit with Beryl, for she had taken a great fancy to him, and would even let him read to her if Alan Fairfax by any chance were absent; and there was not a single inhabitant of the quiet village who would not have walked miles to serve the invalid and her brave-spirited, bright-faced little sister.

From that first moment, when his eyes rested upon her as she favoured him with that little stiff bow, Saxon Cardew had done homage to Ruby Desborough, his "sweet princess," as he secretly termed her.

But she was a contrary-minded damsel, this imperious little girl, and chose to close her ears to the tale he would be telling her.

She had come to Grassdene, prepared to carry on a vigorous crusade against the nobler sex—for had not all their heavy sorrow been caused by a man?

And now here was this pleasant-faced genial young man doing his best to upset all her plans, letting her see that he considered her ideas absurd, and only to be treated with the utmost scorn.

And what made it harder to resent his bold advances was that everyone, her aunts, her kind, faithful friend, Dr. Fairfax—yes, and even his sweet-tempered old mother, who was as devoted to the girls as Alan himself—would not help her one bit, but instead seemed to aid and abet this audacious suitor in the most barefaced way.

Bel looked up with a relieved sigh, pushing away the formidable exercise with which she was struggling, and waiting to hear how Saxon would take Ruby's stern remark.

He was smiling indulgently at the dignified little governess, and for a second did not speak; then, as Bel expected, he proceeded to object strenuously to the finishing of that French exercise.

"I say this is not a morning to be penned up in a poky room!" he concluded, in somewhat cross tones, for he could see Ruby would not yield. "Come out into the garden at once! You are looking quite pale and fagged!"

Ruby frowned angrily at the tender, solicitous words, knowing well that her sharp-witted pupil was listening intently.

"I am perfectly well," she retorted, in frigid tones, "and therefore shall not come out until our work is finished. Have you forgotten that we are all to go over to Mrs. Fairfax's, and that Bel in consequence secures a half-holiday?"

"Ah, yes," exclaimed the conscience-stricken Bel, snatching up her pen again, "and you're a darling to let me go! Saxon, please don't stay here bothering."

Saxon shrugged his shoulders, but lifted his elbows from the window-sill.

"If Bel turns studious then, indeed, I must retire!" he cried, in comically surprised tones. Then, wickedly, "Miss Ruby, can't you give me something to do? The aunts are too busy to talk to me, and—and," lowering his voice, "I don't like to disturb that little-tite."

Ruby's eyes followed his as he turned and nodded his head towards where Alan Fairfax was slowly pacing the smooth green lawn, carefully guiding Beryl's feeble footsteps. She sighed faintly as she looked.

"It would make no difference," she said, sadly, "to her at least."

"Still, I would rather leave them alone," responded Saxon, quickly, angry with himself for bringing a cloud on the bright face.

"Come in and help us with this bewildering old French!" cried the impulsive young sister, who never wearied of her brother's presence.

"Certainly not!" exclaimed Ruby, crossly. "He must go away at once!" Then, with a sudden mischievous smile, "You may go and gather us some strawberries if you like!"

"Ah, cruel damsel!" murmured the young man, lazily. "Well, I go to do your bidding,

but I hope you will remember that the thermometer has reached an awful height, and that I stand a very good chance of a sun-stroke!"

"In that case you may be sure of my deepest sympathy," said the girl, serenely.

Saxon heaved a heavy sigh, but he took himself away, knowing she would not look at him again until her work was finished.

"Dear old Saxon!" cried Bel, enthusiastically, "he's the dearest, noblest man in all the world, isn't he, Ruby?"

"I don't know, child," answered the young lady, in very sedate tones. "I—I have not studied Mr. Cardew."

For a moment Bel looked at her in a puzzled way.

"Don't you like Saxon?" she asked at last, slowly, the frank eyes, so like her brother's, fixed steadily upon Ruby.

"Oh yes, I like him!" came the hurried answer—those searching eyes seeming to force the words from her.

"I'm glad of that!" said Bel, solemnly, then bent her head over her exercise again with a happy smile.

She was an astute young person, this angular, ignorant Bel; and though she might have to search out every word in her French translation she was quick enough to notice the soft blush that crept into Ruby's pale cheeks as she answered her pupil's impetuous question.

"Oh, if she does like him, how lovely it will be!" Bel thought, rapturously.

"Have you found that word, Bel?" The quick question came from Ruby, who, in a minute, had recovered her self-composure, and startled Bel out of an enchanting day-dream.

"In one moment!" she cried, reddening guiltily.

"I'll come and help you," said Ruby, quite gently. "Dinner is to be early, and we must be ready for it."

"Mr. Cardew, I—I should like to know who told you about us—Beryl and myself, I mean?"

Saxon Cardew, startled out of a long, happy reverie, turned and looked curiously at the grave-faced girl beside him.

He was taking her and Bel in his high dog-cart to Holliswood, in which quaint, old-world village Dr. Fairfax and his mother had taken up their abode.

The young doctor had come over with a pressing invite from his mother to the inmates of the Manor and the Cottage to come and take tea with her; and he and the aunts and Beryl were on in front in a roomy, comfortable barouche.

Ruby, considering Bel a formidable obstacle to any attempt at sentiment on Saxon's part, had consented very readily to occupying a seat in the Squire's dog-cart, little knowing that her gracious manner had at once raised the young man's hopes to fever heat.

She depended serenely on Bel to keep Saxon in order, but she little knew the sharpness of her devoted young pupil.

That afternoon Bel developed a wonderful taste for wild flowers, and, time after time, jumping down from her high seat, would wander away to gather some far-off spray of honeysuckle, leaving the young couple comparatively alone in the quiet, picturesque country lanes.

They were nearing Holliswood, and Bel had gone off on a last run after a straggling group of poppies, when Ruby suddenly looked up and asked that question.

"Fellow of the name of Mellon," answered Saxon, promptly, meeting her anxious eyes very frankly.

"Oh, I know him!" cried the girl, clasping her hands tightly, and gazing straight before her. "He—he was at the Fields when it all happened."

"Then he knew that dastardly villain?"

"Yes. He was the one who afterwards came and told us of Seymour's death," said

Ruby, in low, sad tones. "We had been hoping up to then that we might find the wicked wretch, and bring him face to face with Beryl. But, alas! he being dead, we have nothing to look forward to."

"Was this Mellon a friend of Seymour's?" asked Saxon, sharply, laying his great hand on Ruby's in his excitement.

"Yes, a great friend."

"Humph! no recommendation for Mellon."

Ruby smiled faintly, and, drawing her hand away, turned to look for Bel.

Saxon relapsed into thought again, staring intently all the while at her pretty profile; then, all at once, he propounded a startling idea.

"Suppose Mellon brought you a false tale? Suppose Seymour, fearing your father's vengeance, persuaded Mellon to mislead you all?" he said, growing intensely excited as he went on.

"What!" cried the girl, twisting sharply round, and growing so pale that Saxon felt quite frightened. "Do you know anything?"

"No," hurriedly, "I don't, but that idea has taken strong hold of my mind. I don't believe that scoundrel is dead."

"Oh, if he were not!" began Ruby, eagerly, then frowned and grew despondent again.

"Even if he were not we can never find him."

"Can we not?" exclaimed Saxon, sitting up straight, and looking so brave and trustworthy that Ruby could not find it in her heart to resent that familiar "we." "I'd find him if he were at the other end of the world, did you bid me go."

At this impetuous speech the young lady blushed and frowned, though all the time her heart was thrilling and bounding.

"That would be extremely foolish!" she said, severely, "considering you have not the remotest idea what he is like."

"All true," in vexed tones. Then more cheerfully, "But you might describe him!"

"I can do better than that," said Ruby, quickly. "I can show you his photograph. I have kept it always."

She drew a little case from her pocket, and, opening it, took from between some papers a photo, and handed it to him.

"Did your sister like this man at all?" queried Saxon, in low, curious tones, as he stared steadily at the handsome, smiling face.

"Not one bit. Why, even then she knew and loved Alan, and thought of no one else!"

"Poor Beryl!" said Saxon, softly. "And you say the doctors think the sight of this man might have a good effect on her?"

"Yes, if he were suddenly to appear before her and speak to her."

"Then the attempt shall be made," said Saxon, his eyes beaming. "This man is not dead. I saw him talking to Mellon as I entered the restaurant, where, half-an-hour later, he—Mellon—told me the tale."

"Not dead!" gasped out the girl. "Oh, Heaven! is there yet a chance? But no! Mellon will have warned him—will have told him where we are. He would leave England at once, knowing we were here," and, overcome by the thought, she lifted her hands to hide the tears that would come.

"Oh, don't cry, Ruby!" implored Saxon. "Listen to me. To-morrow I will go to New York, and try to trace him."

"And you will do all that for us?" she said, slowly, and turning her eyes to him.

"For you I will!" he answered with emphasis.

"How good you are!" she whispered, laying her little hand for a minute on his.

"Thank you," he said in low but fervent tones, for Bel was hurrying up. "But, remember, I shall claim my reward in the end, and I think you know who alone can give it to me."

Ruby reddened and drew her hand hastily away, gladly welcoming Bel's return as an excuse for remaining silent.

Bel sprang in, and Saxon, after a few laughing remarks on her long absence, whipped up his horse and drove on, his mind full of ex-

cited thoughts of all he was to do for his sweet, imperious princess.

"I shall be off to-morrow!" he decided, and feeling all the happier for having settled the question in his own mind, turned in at the gates of the doctor's house, little dreaming that within the comfortable red-brick mansion something was happening which would put an end to his intended expedition.

CHAPTER IV.

While Saxon went round to the stables with his cart the two girls ran in at the open door, crossed the cool-tiled hall, and then stood still a moment, doubtful as to where to go.

"Oh, they must be in the drawing-room," decided Ruby, at last, in her quick way. "Ah, yes, I can hear their voices. As some secret conference going on, ladies?" she cried, putting her bright face in at the door suddenly, and looking keenly at them all—and most especially at the motherly-looking woman who was talking so eagerly.

This last was Mrs. Fairfax, the young doctor's mother, who lived only for his happiness, and that of the poor invalid, beside whom she now sat.

Beryl's misfortune had been a bitter disappointment to the cheery, happy old lady. But she had bravely met all trials and vexations; and giving up everything—home, friends, and old associations—had taken the place of a mother to the two helpless girls, only eager to comfort them and emulate Alan's example of unselfish, loving devotion to the lovely, mournful girl who might never be his wife, but to whom all the love of his heart was given.

"Well, you dear old gossip!" said Ruby, saucily, patting the nice old face, tenderly. "What is this tale you would be telling? Come, what is it? Has Alan been summoned to his first English patient?"

Mrs. Fairfax laughed at the string of questions, but said nothing till she had welcomed Bel.

"Did you ever know anything like this child?" she cried, then laying a loving hand on Ruby's shoulder, but apostrophising the Misses Desborough, who smiled and shook their heads until their side curls danced again.

"Am I right, then?" asked Ruby, with a laugh, kneeling down by Beryl and drawing the sunny head down on her shoulder. "Has something happened?"

"Oh, my dear, yes! And Alan is attending his first patient; though, unluckily, he's up in my spare bedroom instead of in his own house," gasped out Mrs. Fairfax, finding it a hard task to speak clearly in her eagerness to tell the tale.

"Here!" echoed the girl, in amazement, while Bel suddenly sat up in her chair, and listened eagerly.

"Yes, indeed! I was just telling your dear aunts all about it when you came in, child. But—" a sudden idea flashing into her mind, as she gazed lovingly at the girl's pretty flushed face—"where is Mr. Cardew? He has come, surely?"

"Yes, I am here, madam!" cried Saxon's genial voice, before either of the girls could answer, "and as eager as anyone to hear all about it!"

"Well, it won't take me long," said the old lady, a very satisfied light creeping into her kindly eyes as she saw the look Saxon bent on the girl whose face was half-hidden by her sister's golden head. "It was just this way. I was sitting out there down by the gates, watching for you all when a horse came galloping furiously round the corner. I was startled, I can tell you; and all the more so because I could see there was a man lying half on and half off the creature's back. I screamed to the two men that were working here in the garden 'Help,' and they went running to help him; but before ever they could get the gates open the animal had tossed its burden right off its back, and into the brook

on the other side of the road, and went galloping away out of sight.

"The men lifted the poor fellow out of the water, and offered to carry him back to the Oak Tree Inn, where they said they knew he was staying. But—but—but—"

"But he looked so forlorn and wretched that you had him carried in here, you good Samaritan!" cried impulsive Ruby, nodding very kindly at the excited lady.

"Well, I did!" confessed Mrs. Fairfax, reluctantly. "You see, I knew Alan would be here in a minute, and could see to him."

There was a smile on every face at her naive excuses.

"Ah, you may all laugh!" said Mrs. Fairfax, shaking her plump finger at the delighted Bel; "but really, he could not—! He! here comes Alan! and Hannah with the tea as well! Now we shall hear the news and be refreshed at the same time."

She bustled away to superintend the settling of the dainty, tempting afternoon tea-table, and became thoroughly absorbed in measuring out the scented tea into the old silver teapot, and filling it from the tiny brass kettle which the neat little handmaid brought in.

"That will do, Hannah!" she said at last.

"I won't keep you any longer, because Delia must go up to the gentleman at once. Eh, Alan?"

"Oh, yes, at once!" answered the grave-faced young doctor, from his seat by Beryl, a post no one thought of keeping when he entered the room. "Tell her just to watch over him, and I will be up again soon."

"What do you think of your patient, Dr. Fairfax?" asked Miss Mary, gently.

"Very badly, Miss Desborough," came the slow answer. "He stands a poor chance, I am afraid."

"Oh, poor man!" exclaimed Bel, abruptly, as she handed round the cakes. "That hateful horse!"

"Nay, child, 'tis something more than the fall and the drenching that the poor fellow got that makes me uneasy!"

"What, then, dear?" asked his mother, quickly.

"He has heart disease in its worst form. I fancy he must have been struggling with the awful pain when the animal bolted with him, and the excitement and rapid motion made him faint. Otherwise he is not hurt, and if he would only keep quiet for a few days, might possibly get over this attack. I impressed this fact upon him, and assured him of a welcome, yet he is worrying about getting away at once—says he only came down on business, and must get back to town in the morning."

"Do you know him at all, Fairfax?" asked Saxon, from his post by the open window.

"No," said Alan, in hesitating tones, "he is an utter stranger to me, and yet there is something in the tone of his voice that seems strangely familiar to me. I was bothering over it the whole time I was with him."

"Beryl!" cried Ruby, suddenly, in frightened tone, "what is the matter, dear?"

At the quick exclamation they all turned to look at the invalid. She was sitting bolt upright in her chair, a bright spot of colour in each pallid cheek, a strange glitter in the beautiful blue eyes, her breath coming in gasps, her thin hands tightly clenched.

Without a word Alan stooped and lifted her to her feet, speaking to her in low, soothing tones.

"What is it, dear one?" he asked, softly, while the others moved away, knowing well how his influence alone could soothe her.

"Alan!" the poor girl gasped out, clinging to him eagerly. "Oh! take me out of this house! There is something evil in it—something that makes me afraid!"

"You shall come with me in the garden, child!" answered Alan, quietly, yet utterly astonished at this mood. "But, darling, there is nothing here to hurt you, and if there were, Alan, who loves you, would keep you

from all harm. You know that, do you not, dearest?"

"Yes," with a great sigh. Then raising her innocent face to him, "Kiss me, Alan, and then I shall know."

Without a moment's hesitation the young man bent his head and left a reverent kiss on the pathetic lips; then, beckoning them to follow, drew Beryl out into the sunny, quaint old garden.

"How sad it all seems!" ejaculated little Miss Ruth, openly wiping away the tears which had rushed into her eyes as she witnessed that solemn caress.

Mrs. Fairfax shook her head mournfully, while Miss Mary looked so unutterably sad that Saxon, who adored the little spinsters, and could not bear to see a cloud on their usually bright faces, made a sudden step forward with the evident intention—as Ruby, who was watching him, guessed—of telling them of the hopeful feeling which had taken possession of Ruby's mind and his.

"Alan is looking for our coming!" the girl cried, hastily, with an awful frown at the rash young man.

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed Mrs. Fairfax, hastening to the window, and passing through at once, while the maiden ladies, catching Saxon's imploring glance at Ruby, suddenly began to think they might be *de trop*, and therefore followed their hostess without delay.

Ruby moved after them, but Saxon laid an imploring hand on her arm and prevented her, much to her indignation.

"Let me go, please!" she said, coldly.

"Not till you forgive me. And, after all, I did not let the secret out!"

"But you would have done had I not stopped you?"

"Oh, don't be sarcastic!" he cried, impatiently. "I am sure you were dying to tell them."

At this bold thrust her anger melted, and, to Saxon's delight, she burst into a merry little laugh.

"True, oh, king!" she cried, lightly, then seeing a dangerous gleam in the expressive brown eyes, fled into the garden.

The pretty room was empty now—at least, it seemed so for a short while, the only sounds that disturbed its stillness being the buzzing of a great bee as it flew in at the window and settled on a lump of sugar.

But presently, from behind the curtain which hung across the entrance to a smaller room, there stepped a thin, lanky girl, with somewhat dishevelled brown locks and a very determined, excited face.

"Good!" she murmured. "They've never missed me, and I've plenty of time. I'm just dying to see that man, and I know if I'd asked Dr. Fairfax he'd have refused to let me up."

Rapidly she crept out of the room, up the shallow stairs, and in at the door of the spare bedroom.

"Who are you?" said a deep voice, suddenly, startling her awfully—for she had imagined the patient would be lying in a heavy stupor—as the invalids in novels always were; and thinking this, had been looking round cautiously for Delia—Mrs. Fairfax's old servant.

However, she soon recovered her equanimity, and coming up to the side of the bed, looked with deep interest at the ghastly, yet handsome face, with its wild, gleaming eyes, and thick black moustache and beard.

"Where's Delia?" she asked, quickly.

"The woman? Oh, she's gone down for some hateful concoction which I am to drink!" Then crossly, "Who are you?"

"Bel Cardew, a friend of the doctor's," replied the girl, serenely, her fearless brown eyes looking straight at him.

"Ha! the doctor!" came the quick exclamation. "What does he say of me?"

"He says you'll soon be all right if you keep quiet," answered Bel, with wonderful wisdom.

"That's an impossibility," he said, bitterly.

"I've too much on my conscience, child. I can't keep still."

Bel's eyes opened wide at this, yet she kept quiet, and waited for him to speak again.

"And yet I must get my strength back—just for a time," he said presently, in dreamy tones. "I have a duty to perform—a solemn task; but after that is done, why the sooner I go the better."

"No! no!" cried impulsive Bel, seizing his burning hand in hers. "Don't think that, my poor dear!"

Over the man's face crept a wonderfully softened expression at her impetuous words.

"My poor dear!" he murmured, in weak faint tones. "I don't think anyone has spoken to me like that since my mother left me long, long ago."

There were tears in Bel's eyes now, and with a sudden impulse, though half-ashamed, she lifted her hand and pushed the hair back from his hot forehead.

"Talk to me," he said, presently. "Tell me of yourself."

Bel was nothing loth. She told him of her beloved brother, of the lovely old Manor House, of the people round about, and, lastly, of her delightful new governess.

"Ruby Desborough!" repeated the man, in low tones, lifting his hand to shade his face. "That is a pretty name."

"Yes, isn't it?" cried innocent Bel, "and the sister's is as pretty—Beryl. Poor, poor Beryl!"

"Why do you pity her?" he asked, slowly.

"Ah, you do not know. Shall I tell you?" He nodded feebly.

Bel told him everything, her face growing very grave as she went on.

"And if only that wicked, wicked man had not died," she concluded, "the doctor says there might be some chance for the poor darling!"

"Perhaps he is not dead?" said the man, in very faint tones.

"Oh, but he is!" Then hastily, "How pale you are! See, I will call Delia," and softly laying down his icy hand she flew away, and despatched the astonished Delia to the sick room.

"And you are going all the way to New York, Saxon?" said Bel, in doleful tones.

"Yes, child, and perhaps further. Ruby bade me tell no one but you; and now my little sister will let me go, I know, when she thinks what good I may do."

It was the same evening, and Saxon and Bel were taking their usual stroll through the moonlit Manor gardens.

"Yes," said Bel, with a huge sigh, "I—I wouldn't stop you going, dear; but, oh! how lost I shall feel!"

Saxon stooped and kissed her fondly; then, thinking to distract her thoughts, asked if she would like to see Seymour's photograph.

"Oh, yes!" the girl cried, excitedly.

"Show it me, dear."

In another moment it was in her hand, and Saxon, striking a match, held it so that she might see the photo.

Eagerly the girl bent her head to look at it, but scarcely were her eyes upon it when a mad fit seemed to seize her. She dropped the photo, and throwing her long arms round the amazed Saxon, twisted him backwards and forwards in a very frenzy of delight.

"Belinda!" ejaculated the young man, in his surprise, using the name she hated, "what is the matter? Ah, mind! you have dropped the photo, and are stepping on it!"

"You may leave it on the ground," Bel said, in joyous tones. "You won't want it, and you need not go to New York!"

"Bel! are you crazy?" demanded her brother, desperately.

"No," demurely, "I am quite sane." Then, in deeply tragic tones, "You need not go to New York because—because—"

"Well?" queried Saxon, sharply, as the young hypocrite made an effective pause.

"Because, you old darling, Randal Seymour

is lying ill and helpless in Mrs. Fairfax's spare room!"

CHAPTER V.

The next morning the doctor and his cheery mother had an early visitor. Alan had only just risen from the breakfast-table and stepped out into the sweet, fresh air of the summer morning, taking his newspaper with him, when the quick tread of horse's feet made him glance up to see Saxon Cardew riding quickly up the avenue.

"What is it?" cried out Alan, sharply, his thoughts flying instinctively to Beryl. "Is—is anything wrong?"

"Nothing," came the quick, firm response. "But I have good news to tell you, old fellow—news so good that I came off first thing to tell it to you!"

Alan stared at him meditatively, then beckoned to a man to hold his horse, and led his early guest into the cosy little breakfast-room, where his mother was feeding her birds.

"Mother, here is Cardew!" he said, lightly, his mind relieved of his fears for Beryl. "He has come with good news for us, so he says!"

"I guess it!" promptly exclaimed the old lady, turning a beaming face to the young man. "On your way home last night you made Ruby say 'Yes!'"

Saxon laughed and coloured.

"Hardly, madam!" he said, in comical tones. "You forget that Bel went with us; and though I am not shy I am scarcely bold enough to make love before her eagle eyes."

"Ah, I forgot Bel!" cried the old lady, with a sigh. "Then what is it you have to tell us?"

"Something about Beryl!" answered the young man, with beaming eyes.

"What!" cried Alan, starting up. "What can you possibly—?"

"Stay!" interposed Saxon, "let us come to the point at once. Do you know the name of that man upstairs?"

"No!" answered the doctor, impatiently. "He is a stranger to us both."

"He should not be then. Only yesterday Ruby showed me his photograph, and I recognised it at once. I had seen him only a few weeks ago in company with that man, Mellon, who told me Beryl's sad story. Looking at that photo I was able to tell Ruby that Randal Seymour was yet alive."

"Good heavens! that man under my roof!" stammered the doctor, deepest anger in every tone.

"Wait! I have something more to say," cried Saxon, laying his hand on Alan's arm.

"Miss Ruby gave me the photo then, and I promised to go in search of the man, and, if possible, bring him here. Last night I told Bel of my intention, and showed the child Seymour's photograph. Then, to my utter surprise, she told me how—when we were in the garden—she, full of curiosity, had stolen up to the invalid's room and had even talked to him, and that the photo I showed her was the image of him."

"Ah, Alan! that man!" cried the mother, in agitated tones. "How was it you did not know him?"

The doctor shook his head.

"I think it must have been the dreadful change in him. I only saw him once at the Fields, and then he was in the most splendid health. Now he is only a wreck of a man; and, besides, has grown a beard. You remember how his voice bothered me?"

"How is he this morning?" queried Saxon, quietly.

"Better," said the doctor, shortly, "and will go on improving if he is only kept perfectly quiet."

"And Beryl?" asked Mrs. Fairfax, wistfully. "What about her seeing him, dear?"

"Oh, she must not—at any rate, for a few days," said Alan, pacing hurriedly up and down, a deeply anxious look on his face. "Yesterday she was quite upset—in some strange

way she must have felt that that villain was near her. No, I could not venture on the experiment of bringing him into her presence—for a few days, at any rate. And he, too—wicked as he has been—I cannot put away from me the thought that any deep emotion may kill him!"

There was silence for a moment, then Saxon spoke again:—

"He told Bel he had a solemn duty to perform; that that duty had brought him down here. I cannot help thinking that Mellon told him of your theory concerning Beryl's only chance of being cured, and that the stings of an uneasy conscience have forced him to come and make what atonement he can for his sin."

"Ah, yes," murmured Mrs. Fairfax, gently. "Poor fellow! how he must have suffered!"

"Oh, mother! what a tender heart you have!" exclaimed her son, gloomily. "I cannot forget what this man has done for Beryl!"

"Nor I, my son," she said, gravely. "Yet I can rejoice at his penitence, and hope that it may help him to make reparation."

"Nay, that is what I most fear," groaned out Alan, growing very pale. "Think of the horrible disappointment should she take no notice of his presence! or, if—in agonised, trembling tones—"the shock should kill her!"

"Then you must banish the thought," said Saxon, firmly, though he felt just as nervous and unsettled as Alan himself. "I'll tell you what you shall do. You shall let this Seymour continue to think you do not know him (if he thinks he is unrecognised he won't worry, and, therefore, will recover all the sooner). You shall do your best to restore Beryl to her usual placid mood, and then, in a few days, you will try the experiment."

Alan smiled sadly.

"Sometimes I think it would be better to leave my darling as she is. She seems to be happy."

"Yes; but you, who love her—idolise her—are not!" cried his mother, vehemently. "Mr. Cardew is right, indeed; you should risk all now the chance offers."

A faint, weary smile crept over the doctor's handsome face.

"If only we were sure!" he muttered. Then, in loud, bitter tones, "I cannot see much of him; I should betray myself, I know."

"Well, well! we can manage that," said his mother, cheerfully, in answer to a sign from Saxon. "I have installed myself as his nurse. You need only visit him professionally once a day. Then, when he is stronger and comes downstairs, you or I will tell him all, and ask him to help us."

"Capital!" cried Saxon, approvingly. "And now order round your horse, old fellow, and ride over with me to Grassdene. You shall tell the dear old spinsters all about it, and read to Beryl, whilst I—well, I—am—"

"Whilst you enlighten Ruby?" suggested Mrs. Fairfax, quietly helping him out of his stammering fit.

"Thanks, yes! Just so!" said he, coolly; "though I'm afraid she'll be rather snubby with me when she finds out how little I have done in the finding of Seymour."

"Ah, don't be despondent!" exclaimed the old lady, with a smiling glance at his frank face. "If you had never seen that photograph this Seymour might have slipped away unknown by any of us. He is penitent now; but he is ill and depressed. When his strength returns he might easily lose the remorseful feeling, and give up the idea of atonement. There! that is something for Ruby to ponder on, if you put it clearly to her!"

"Oh, I shall not do that!" came the proud answer. "She must take me on my own merits."

"Oh, pride! pride!" cried the old lady, reproachfully. Then, seeing the horses were waiting, bade them keep up their spirits, and then trotted away to her restless, gloomy patient.

On reaching Grassdene the two young men left their horses at the Manor, and walked quickly through the village, and in at the cottage gates.

"I won't come in with you," said Saxon, suddenly, as they neared the porch. "I—I'll go round to the schoolroom window!"

Alan nodded in an absent fashion, and passed in at the door, while Saxon turned off into a little, winding path and cautiously approached the open window.

Arrived within a few yards of it he paused to take a long, long look at the saucy, charming face that was all the world to him.

Ruby was sitting at the little table, resting her chin in her hands, and looking dreamily out at the waving branches of the trees.

To-day she was very pale, and Saxon—quick to notice every change in her face—saw at once the dark shadows under the wistful eyes, and guessed that she had slept but little during the night.

"Poor Beryl has been upset, and my little girl is worrying about her!" he thought, lovingly, then stepped out from his hiding-place, and boldly approached the window.

"Oh, Mr. Cardew!" cried Ruby, a soft glow rushing into her pale cheeks as she caught sight of him. "Why are you here? I told you I hated to be disturbed!"

"Yes, I know you do—ordinarily," he retorted, never moving his eyes from the sweet, indignant face; "but this is an extraordinary occasion!"

Ruby, perfectly mystified, stared at him in angry amazement.

"I thought you were going away?" she said, presently, in icy tones.

"Yes, I was," carelessly. "Changed my mind, though, last night—eh, Bel?"

Bel laughed joyously; but seeing the anger and disappointment on her governess's sweet, young face, she jumped up and flung her arms round Ruby's neck.

"Oh, don't look like that, dear!" she cried, eagerly. "He was going, and I was very sad; but now we have found out something wonderful, that makes it no use for Saxon to go away. May I go now, dear, while he tells you?"

She was half-way out of the window as she spoke; but Ruby, surprised and excited as she felt, took fright at the idea of a *tête-à-tête* with Saxon, and sprang forward to detain her pupil. But it was too late. Saxon, with a little significant smile, had lifted Bel down into the garden.

"Go home, child! Order your pony, and ride over to see Mrs. Fairfax," he said, coolly.

"But—but her lessons! She has only just commenced them!" exclaimed Ruby, in troubled tones.

"Oh, bother the lessons!" cried Saxon, impatiently, as he watched his angular young sister scamper off down the path. Then he placed his hands on the sill, and sprang lightly into the room. "You shall not teach any more to-day," he went on in coolly authoritative tones, and with a loving look at the pretty flushed face. "You have had a sleepless night!"

"Nonsense!" she cried, petulantly. "How can you tell?"

He laughed tenderly. "My eyes are very keen, when I look at you!" he said, audaciously.

Ruby bit her lip, and shrugged her shoulders in a vexed way. Then turned to the door.

"If I am not to teach I—I would rather go to Beryl than listen to your mysterious speeches," she said, haughtily.

"That's polite!" he laughed. Then suddenly becoming serious, "But don't you want to hear my news? Don't you want to know why I need go in search of that man?"

Ruby grew very pale at these questions. Was the man dead after all?

"Why tell me?" she stammered, clutching the back of a chair for support.

"Because," said Saxon, rapidly, seeing she could not bear much suspense, "he is here, close to us, and not likely to run away. He

is the man we heard of yesterday, who was thrown from his horse just outside the doctor's gates."

"He! Randal Seymour!" gasped the girl, growing so pale that Saxon made a hasty movement towards her, but drew back as she shrank from his touch. "Oh, poor, poor Alan!" she murmured, the tears crowding into her eyes. "What will he do?"

"Yes, indeed, 'tis very trying for him; but he has already decided what course he shall follow. Seymour does not imagine Alan remembers him, so he means to hide his knowledge for a few days, until the man is a little stronger."

"Who, then, found him out?" queried the girl, surprised.

"Why, my madcap, Bel! Yesterday afternoon the curious young monkey crept up and saw and even talked with him. Then, when last night I showed her that photo, she declared the sick man to be Randal Seymour!"

"Oh, to think of it all!" murmured Ruby, faintly, "tis like a great drama!"

"Yes, and I have played but a very insignificant part in it, child!" said Saxon, gravely, "and I meant to do so much."

"Never mind," she said, with strange, sweet boldness, and laying her hand for a minute on his. "I—I am glad to think you had not to leave Grassdene." Then, alarmed at the expression in his delighted eyes, as he turned swiftly to her, she snatched her hand from his, and flew away like a timid bird, never pausing until she was safe with her aunts in the drawing-room.

She found them in quite as excited a frame of mind as herself, for the doctor's wonderful news had quite shaken them out of their usual placid routine. They were sitting bolt upright, their knitting discarded, gazing tearfully at Beryl, who was lying back in her low chair, gazing straight before her, and listening dreamily to Alan's low, musical voice as he read to her.

"Oh, my dear, have you heard? Has Saxon told you?" whispered Miss Mary, as the girl crept in and came up to her.

"Yes, dear," murmured Ruby; then seeing Saxon approaching she stepped over to Beryl, and knelt down beside her.

"Ruby, Ruby!" murmured the invalid, restlessly. "My pretty Ruby! I—I dreamed of her last night, and there was someone in the dream, but I never heard his name; but I felt afraid, as I did at that house, Alan!" suddenly turning to the young doctor, "you won't make me go there again?"

"No, darling!" Alan answered, in the steady tones that always seemed to calm her. "I will promise you that!"

At his words the look of terror faded from the beautiful eyes, and she laid her head against him with such a confiding gesture that they—all watching her and remembering the ordeal in store for her—felt their hearts grow heavy and sad within them. And presently, one by one, they stole away, leaving the poor young thing alone with her sad-faced lover, the man who had given to her all the deep, passionate love of his noble heart.

"I wish you would come into the garden for a while, child!" said Saxon, in low tones, when for a few minutes he and Ruby were alone in the cool, tiled hall. "I—I want to speak to you." But Ruby was impervious; his pleading tone did not affect her.

"Not now," she said, quietly.

"When, then?" eagerly.

"When—when all our suspense is over," came the answer, very slowly. "Ha! here is Aunt Mary! Doubtless she would be pleased to accompany you into the garden!" and then, with a mocking laugh, the girl vanished up the quaint old staircase.

CHAPTER VI.

Meanwhile, at Holliswood, kindly Mrs. Fairfax was doing her best to cheer up her despondent patient. She had entered his room in a brisk, refreshing way, and had drawn up

the blinds, which Delia half-an-hour before had so carefully drawn down.

"Delia always seems to think invalids want no light," she said, cheerily, as she moved softly about the room.

"I told her to do it," growled out a melancholy voice from the bed. "I feel I am too wicked to be seen."

"Oh, that's nonsense!" said she, hastily, her gentle heart full of pity for this haggard, emaciated sinner. "Even if you have been bad, Heaven's light is free to you as much as to the noblest and best of mankind."

She was standing by his bedside as she said this in grave, sweet tones; and suddenly, out of her great pity for the conscience-stricken man, she stooped, and kissed him softly right on his lips.

"You should not," he said, hoarsely, though he clasped her cool hand in his burning fingers. "I am not fit to touch."

"I think you are," she answered, quietly sitting down beside him, and taking up her work.

"You do not know I am, madam?" he said, turning his fierce eyes to her. "You would fly from the room if I were to tell you my name."

"Tell it me," was all she said, calmly counting the stitches on her needle.

"I am Randal Seymour," he said, sharply, watching to see her look of horror. But, instead, she nodded kindly at him.

"I knew it," she said, quietly, seeing it was best for him that she should be frank and open.

"And—and your son?" he stammered, "the man I so bitterly injured. Does he, too, know me?"

"Yes, he knows."

"And does he not long to kill me, as I lie here?" came the passionate question.

Mrs. Fairfax leaned forward, and spoke in her most impressive tones.

"I shall tell you nothing," she said, gravely. "If you do not try to be calm. My son would be most angry with me could he see you now."

Seeing she was quite determined, the wild, passionate creature sank back on his pillows, and forced himself by a mighty effort to be calm and composed.

"May I tell you all about it, my kind friend?" he asked, when at last he could speak without a tremble in his voice.

"Yes," she said, gently. "I know it will relieve you to unburden your mind."

So in low, humble tones he told of his awful horror when he heard what his rash act had done for the beautiful girl he had loved with all the fervour of his passionate heart; of his cowardly subterfuge to save himself from her father's and her lover's righteous anger; of his coming to England, at last, and hearing from Mellon of the great blow the news of his supposed death had been to the young doctor's hopes for Beryl.

Then into his mind had crept the idea that he might, perchance, atone for his awful sin—might, by showing himself to his victim, restore to her reason, and, in the end, bring happiness to the two people he had so deeply wronged.

For a time he could not make up his mind to the step, remembering that the happiness of Alan and Beryl would be his misery, for he still loved the girl deeply, passionately. Yet, in the end, his nobler nature conquered, and he had come to Holliswood, firmly resolved to make the fullest atonement he could.

Then, just when he had schooled himself to go through the ordeal of an interview with his rival, he had met with his accident, and, to his horror, when he recovered consciousness, found himself a helpless invalid in the house of the man he had wronged.

"There, there, my dear!" cried Mrs. Fairfax, when at last he paused, and turned his eager eyes to her, "you feel all the lighter-hearted for telling me, don't you?"

Seymour nodded, and smiled languidly.

"Then now I will tell you what Alan wishes. He will do nothing till you are quite strong and

well; then, if you will, he would like you to see Beryl and speak to her."

"Is he sure it will be for her good?" asked Seymour, abruptly.

"No, no, my poor boy! His fears are great. The experiment may have no effect on her at all. Yet, on the other hand, it may do wonders. Ah, 'tis a fearful time for Alan!"

"Where is he now?" the man demanded, quickly, a heavy frown on his dark face.

"He has gone to Grassdene to break the news to Beryl's aunts, and—and Ruby, dear little Ruby. Why, do you want him?"

"Ah, no!" with a deep sigh. "I should like a talk with him when he comes back, but I am in no hurry." He closed his eyes after that, and seemed to doze for a while; then suddenly he asked another question. "Where is that quaint girl who came into my room yesterday?" he said, dreamily.

Mrs. Fairfax laughed a little.

"That is Bel Cardew. She does not live here, and certainly had no business in your bedroom; but she is a queer, inquisitive child."

"I liked her," he said, slowly. "She was so sorry for me. Oh, she's a tender-hearted child, and—why, bless me, here she is riding up the avenue! Bring her in, please!" he cried, imploringly.

Mrs. Fairfax nodded as she hurried away; and presently Bel was established in a low chair by the bedside, holding the thin hand in hers, and talking very cheerily to the wan-faced man.

"Bel," he said, suddenly, "do you know about me?"

Bel nodded quietly.

"Then, you know what a great sin I have committed. But, child, I want you to remember when I am gone that I tried to atone."

Bel, listening to the pathetic, eager voice, felt a lump rising in her throat; but mindful of Mrs. Fairfax's warnings she forced herself to speak calmly.

"What a lot you have to do!" she cried, "First to get quite well, and then, perhaps, to bring back poor Beryl's memory for her. Ah! if you do that you'll make a lot of people happy!"

"Shall I?" he said, quietly.

"Yes, indeed; and my darling brother the most of all, I think!"

"How is that?" he asked, in interested tones.

"Oh, because he loves Ruby dearly; and she won't be kind to him until Beryl is better."

Seymour smiled at the childish, impetuous words.

"I'll do my best," he said, slowly. "I can't do more, can I, child?"

"No," was all Bel said, in sturdy tones, "you can't."

"I must get well soon, then," he said, gently. "I—I should like to do my best for Beryl. And, oh! if only she could say to me the two words 'I forgive!' why I think, Bel, that then I should die happy."

"Oh, don't talk like that!" gasped out poor Bel. "I—I can't bear it."

"Are you sorry for me, child?" he whispered. "Then stroke back my hair as you did yesterday, and call me the name you did then."

"Oh, my poor dear!" cried tender-hearted Bel, stroking back the thick hair, and then, suddenly, she stooped, and kissing him softly, turned, and fled from the room.

On the stairs she encountered Dr. Fairfax.

"Are you going to him?" demanded Bel, scorning to hide the tears that filled her eyes.

"Yes," answered Alan, simply.

"Then please be kind to him," she cried. "I am so sorry for him! And now that he's so sad I think he's the nicest man I ever knew!"

And with this extraordinary remark Bel pushed past him, and, flying downstairs, mounted her pony, and dashed away.

"Queer child!" murmured Alan, going slowly on. "She seems quite taken by him, and the mother's just the same."

And then, with a very grave face, he entered the invalid's room.

For quite an hour he remained there talking quietly—ay, and kindly, too—to the conscience-stricken man who had so deeply injured him.

Mrs. Fairfax, growing uneasy at last, ventured into the room only to find the patient fast asleep, with Alan gravely watching over him.

"Will he soon be better, dear?" she whispered.

"I hope so. In a few days I think we may take him to see Beryl."

And then, leaving his mother in charge, he went down to his study to think it all out, little dreaming that even that very night the awful question was to be decided.

Alan Fairfax went to his room very late that evening, pausing on his way to look in on his patient. He found him apparently fast asleep; so, turning the lamp a little low, and carefully replacing the coverings which Seymour had thrown off him, he went off to bed, glad to think how his patient was improving, and of how soon the trial might be attempted.

Feeling thus contented, he soon fell asleep, and for an hour or two slumbered soundly. But suddenly something or somebody touched him—nay, shook him violently—and, waking with a violent start, he found his mother standing by his bedside, a look of deep alarm on her placid face.

"Mother!" he cried, sharply, "what is it? Beryl?"

"No, dear," she answered, in quick tones. "Tis our patient."

"Ha!" springing out of bed. "What of him?"

"He has gone!" she said, in tragic tones.

"Gone! Left the house, do you mean?"

"Yes. A few minutes ago I woke, and the idea came into my mind that all was not right with him, so slipped on my dressing gown and slippers, and crept into his room. Fancy my horror to find the bed empty, and all his clothes gone! I flew to the staircase, and, looking over, could see that the door was wide open. Oh, Alan! hurry after him, and bring him back!"

"Of course I will. Rouse up one of the servants, mother, while I dress. Tell them to bring round my horse, or, stay, the little phaeton would be better. They must hurry, or I shall be ready before them."

A few minutes later he was off, driving rather slowly, and peering into the deep shadows of the hedges as he drove along.

He had brought a man with him who carried a large lantern and turned it from one side to the other as they passed down the rough, dark lanes on the way to Grassdene.

Alan was thinking deeply, when a sudden exclamation from the man beside him brought him out of his musing fit.

"There be a fire at Grassdene, master!" the man cried, excitedly. "See the light over there!"

Alan looked up quickly, and glancing the way the servant was pointing, noticed at once a strange, lurid glare, lighting up the darkness of the night.

"Good heavens! Whose house is it, I wonder?" he stammered, lashing his spirited pony into a quicker pace. "Keep a sharp look-out for the gentleman, Sam. I must drive on quickly now."

"All right, sir, as fast as you like. He won't escape me."

Alan drove on rapidly, his heart full of anxiety, for something seemed to tell him that the fire meant much to him. Presently, with a sharp twist they rounded the last curve, and came out into Grassdene High Street.

A strange sight met their horrified gaze. Men, women, and children were rushing along through the half-darkness, all making for one certain point; and that point Alan saw, with an icy feeling at his heart, was the home of the little spinsters—the pretty quaint old cottage.

It stood out in bold relief against the dark background, bright tongues of fire darting out

from many a window, and defying the water that was steadily being poured upon them.

"Ha, Cardew!" cried Alan, suddenly recognising in a tall, begrimed young fellow the master of the Manor. "Tell me, where are they all?"

"Safe, my dear fellow, sheltering in the little summer-house. It seems Ruby was the first to be aroused by the smoke, and she got them all out in good time. Go and see to them, old chap. Beryl needs you, I am sure. She seemed awfully excited when last I saw her."

Alan needed no further telling. With hasty steps he strode down the path to the summer-house, deeply thankful to think they were all safe.

Suddenly towards him a queer little figure came flying—Miss Ruth, in a grey dressing-gown, her hair streaming behind her, an awful look of fear in her grey eyes.

"Alan!" she shrieked, as she caught sight of him, "have you caught her?"

"Caught her!" stammered Alan, growing deathly pale.

"Yes, poor Beryl. We brought her here, but she was dreadfully excited, and kept asking to go back to the house to watch the pretty flames. She grew quite angry at last, and suddenly wrenched herself away from us, and disappeared. Poor Ruby fainted then, and I came."

She got no further. With a deep groan Alan turned about, and rushed back to the burning house.

"Well, they are safe, eh?" cried Saxon, from his post in the line of bucket-carriers.

"Ah, no!" cried poor Alan, his tongue seeming to cleave almost to the roof of his mouth. "Beryl has broken away from them, and got into the house again!"

"Oh! that could not be!" shouted Saxon, while a horrified silence fell on the crowd. "We should have seen her."

"I see'd her then!" suddenly cried a child's shrill voice from the crowd. "I see'd a white lady slip in, only I thowt 'twere a ghost. Aye, an 'tis a ghost!" the voice rising to a scream. "Look there at the window!"

At the child's excited speech every head was raised, and a thrill of terror seized upon everyone as there appeared at the window a slight, tall figure, with long golden hair floating behind it.

"Oh! Heaven, help my darling!" cried a man's hoarse voice. Then in tones of thunder Alan called for a ladder.

"Here, sir, here!" cried a sturdy villager, hurrying to a neighbouring haystack, and laying his hand on one—but, alas! too short; half-a-dozen willing hands had fetched another to join to it.

"Good heavens!" muttered Saxon to the Rector, who stood beside him, "the poor girl is wild with all this excitement. I fear that she will rush away as Fairfax climbs the ladder. Ha, look, hi! there is someone behind her—a man! He has caught her, and holds her firmly. Good! good! Alan, look! She is safe!"

The young doctor, who had just fixed the ladder, cast his eyes upwards and started violently.

"Heavens! 'tis Seymour! He does indeed atone!"

Yes, the sinner was doing his best now—he had told Bel that he should. Holding the girl firmly he stepped down on to the beam that ran from the window to the parapet and then on to the ladder, fighting with the flames and smoke, and thus slowly made him way to the ground.

He had kept his face carefully away from Beryl on the way down; but now, as he placed her in Alan's trembling arms, he faced her fully, and in loud, firm tones uttered her name. The effect was magical.

All the fevered light died out of the blue eyes, the colour fled from the exquisite face; then, with a sudden movement, she raised her hand to her forehead.

"Oh!" she cried in pitiful tones, "the weight has gone from here, Alan. I—I remember all now. That man is Randal Seymour. Oh, Alan, keep me safe! Don't let him take me!"

And then, with a strange cry, half-glad, half-mournful, she fell back into Alan's arms and swooned away.

"Have I done well, Fairfax?" said Seymour, in husky tones, gazing down at the pale, lovely face of the girl he had so wildly loved.

"For her you have, indeed," cried Alan, quickly; "but," his keen eye noting the grey hue that was creeping over the man's white face, "you have injured yourself."

"I'm glad of that," came the trembling answer. "Now she is safe I am glad to go!"

"Catch him, Cardew!" cried Alan, hastily, as he reeled and staggered, and the next minute Seymour was lying on the grass to all appearance dead!

CHAPTER VII.

When Beryl awoke from the deep sleep into which she had fallen after her fainting fit she found herself lying on a great sofa in the cosy inner hall at Cardew Manor.

A great fire roared and blazed up the wide chimney; and a noble lion skin rug was tucked carefully around her.

"Where am I?" she cried, in faint tones, lifting her head and looking round. "Ruby! where are you?"

"Here, dear!" answered a voice as tremulous and low as her own, and then Ruby came forward and knelt down by the sofa.

She hardly dared to look into Beryl's eyes, fearing to see the vacant look still in them; but at last, with a mighty effort, she glanced up and saw the steady light of reason in their beautiful blue depths.

"Oh, Beryl, darling! you are all right now!" she cried, exultantly, throwing her arms round her sister, and pressing her little wan face against the other girl's soft cheek.

"Yes! yes!" with a low, glad laugh, "I feel I am. That terrible dull pain has all gone!" then with a faint flush in her cheeks, "Ruby, dear, you must tell me all that has happened since that awful time."

So Ruby told her all—of their coming to England, of Alan's grand devotion, of the disastrous fire that very night, and of their all being brought to Cardew Manor. "Like so many beggars!" she concluded, disdainfully.

Beryl smiled wistfully.

"You have not told me all," she said, slowly, "but never mind, I remember it. I remember that someone caught me and carried me down the ladder. He looked into my eyes as we reached the ground, and, as he did so, something seemed to snap in my head, and all at once my memory returned, and I knew him—knew that it was Randal Seymour, the man who had tried to ruin my life, and who now had saved me, and given me back my memory."

She had grown very excited as she spoke, and now she hid her face on Ruby's shoulder, and began to weep passionately.

"Wait a minute, darling!" whispered Ruby, gently. "I will bring someone to see you."

She slipped away, leaving Beryl crying softly, and yet glancing shyly up to see who would come to her. Presently the heavy curtains parted, and a tall figure entering came swiftly up to the sofa.

"Alan!" she cried, shyly, blushing for the first time since her great misfortune; then losing her shyness suddenly, she slipped her arm round his neck, and laid her face against his. "Ah, Alan! how good you have been to me!" she said, brokenly, "and your mother, too!"

"Yes, the mater has behaved rather splendidly!" said Alan, joyously; "but, then, she loves you, dearest. I've sent off a message to her now, and expect her here soon."

Beryl sighed in a contented way, and gazed into the glowing fire.

"Darling!" began Alan, after a pause, then stopped and hesitated.

"Yes, Alan?" she said, lifting the sweet, blue eyes to his.

"I—I wanted to tell you," he said, naively, "that up to now you have always kissed me!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Beryl, growing rosy red. "And now," went on the doctor, "you don't seem to think of it."

Beryl pulled nervously at the great rug.

"I—I feel different now," she said, in low tones; then all at once, seeing the grave expression in the handsome eyes, she lifted her face and kissed him softly.

"Beryl!" exclaimed Alan, holding her tightly, and giving her the kiss back over and over again. "Ah, darling! how happy we shall be!"

A blissful silence stole over them after that—a silence that was at length disturbed by a quick, hurried tread coming across the hall. It was Bel who ran up to them—her sallow young face pale as death, her eyes inflamed with crying.

"He's worse!" she gasped out, abruptly, then dropping down by Beryl and seizing her hand. "Oh, Beryl! can't you come and see him? He wants you to forgive him!"

"But—but, who is it?" stammered Beryl, in bewilderment.

"Wait, Bel, until she has drunk this," interposed Alan, quickly taking from a little table a glass of wine, and making Beryl drink it.

"Now," he said, slowly, his eyes fixed on the fair, troubled face, "you may tell her."

Bel needed no second permission.

"Ah, Beryl!" she cried, "he was wicked to you once—a great sin! he calls it. But surely, now he has rescued you from a fearful death—yes, and given you back your reason—you will pity and forgive him! He says he shall die happy if you will only come and tell him that."

"Yes! yes!" exclaimed Beryl, throwing off the rug, and holding out her hand to Alan, "take me to him. I—I never knew that he was ill."

"Yes," said Alan, in sad tones. "It seems that he rose from his bed last night soon after we had left him, dressed himself, and left the house, with the intention of walking to Grassdene, and trying to see you. An awful fear had suddenly taken possession of him that he might have a relapse and die without seeing you. As it is, the dreadful excitement of the night has been fatal to him; though he could only have lived for a short time in any case, for his heart is terribly affected."

"Take me to him, please!" said the girl, simply; and Alan, lifting her from the sofa, guided her trembling footsteps, while Bel led the way up the broad staircase and into a large room on the first landing.

When Seymour fell back in that death-like swoon Saxon had had him lifted into one of the carriages he had ordered down, and carried straight to the Manor.

Alan, still holding Beryl, had gone in the same carriage, and watched over the unconscious man, while Ruby sat beside him, and tried to force a little brandy between his lips.

It had been a long time before he came round; but then, though fearfully weak, he was quite sensible, and lay there perfectly quiet, only his quick, dark eyes roving round, as though in search of someone.

Then, when Ruby summoned Alan to Beryl's side, though the girl only whispered her sister's name, the sick man heard it, and started violently, turned his head restlessly from side to side.

"What is it, my poor dear?" asked Bel, gently, who had insisted on being admitted, and who sat beside him, holding his burning hand.

"Beryl," he muttered, eagerly, "is she better?"

Bel nodded at once, for she had caught the glad news from Ruby.

"Thank Heaven!" he cried, faintly; "that makes me very happy." Then, wistfully, "But she would be too weak to come here—too weak to pardon me before I die?"

He succumbed after that to a deathly faintness; and tender-hearted Bel, longing to comfort him when the faintness should have passed away, grew desperate, and determined to appeal to Beryl herself.

As they entered the room a deep silence seemed to fall upon it and upon all assembled there—upon the little spinsters with their scared, yet happy faces—upon the gentle Recto, and the doctor's kindly mother.

The dying man himself grew suddenly calm, fixing his great, dark eyes steadily upon the tall, fair girl approaching him.

She had taken her hand from Alan's as she entered, and making a great effort, crossed the room without help.

In her flowing draperies, her magnificent golden hair all unbound; her lovely, pathetic face pale and calm; her large, blue eyes full of a divine pity, she seemed to all as some pure angel coming to cheer and comfort this poor, erring mortal.

"Beryl!" he said, faintly, as she reached the bedside, and kneeling down took his hand, "you have come! you have answered my prayer!"

"Ah, yes!" she whispered, stroking the thin fingers. "I have come to thank you for saving my life. I have come to ask you to get better, and to be my true friend?"

"I don't want to get better, dear!" he said, with a peaceful smile. "If you will but hold my hand in yours, and tell me you forgive me, I shall die content!"

She hesitated a moment; then seeing how he was waiting, lingering for those words of forgiveness, she lifted the icy hand to her trembling lips, and in clear, sweet tones uttered the words he asked for.

"I forgive you!" she said, simply.

A triumphant smile illumined his face as he listened, but a minute later the awful bluish shade crept round his lips, his head fell suddenly back, and with a faint sigh he died!

"Alan, quick!" cried Beryl, fearfully. "He looks so strange!"

"He's happy now, my poor dear!" cried Bel; and then, bursting into a passion of tears, fled from the room.

"The child is right," said Alan, softly. "Come, Beryl, you can do no more. Come with me and Ruby!"

She had always been accustomed to obey him, and now, at his words, she mechanically submitted, and let him lead her away to her room, where he left her in the loving care of Ruby and the gentle aunts.

A fortnight later, Ruby and Bel were strolling up and down the winding paths in the quaint old Manor garden, one glorious afternoon, talking as fast as they could.

Already Ruby was looking brighter and happier. Her broad, white forehead showed no distressed lines now, her eyes were full of laughter and merriment.

"We chose the house this morning," she was saying, brightly. "It's that little, fanny-looking villa on the Holliswood Road. The aunts are delighted, and so am I; and, Bel! isn't it a mercy the furniture was saved?"

Bel nodded, though she looked decidedly gloomy.

"I hate to think of your leaving here," she said, at length. "Saxon's quite right when he says the house will be like a howling wilderness without you!"

Ruby blushed, and tried to look dignified. "What nonsense!" she said, severely. "I'm sure we have been here long enough—a whole fortnight. And then we have so much to do, all Beryl's *trousseau* to prepare. Alan insists on taking her abroad in October, and she must have clothes!"

Bel laughed at that.

"Are you going to keep to your original idea?" she asked, innocently.

"What do you mean?" said Ruby, idly.

"Why, you said you meant to be a Desborough spinster to the end of your life!"

"So I do," retorted Ruby, firmly. "I shall live with the aunts, and go teaching!"

"I don't think you will," cried Bel, audaciously. "Saxon says—"

"Oh, please don't tell me!" interrupted Ruby, petulantly. "I don't care what your brother says, and if he were here now I should tell him so!"

"Bel, Aunt Mary wants you!" cried a well-known masculine voice at this identical moment.

Turning hastily Ruby saw that Saxon was standing close to them, and meeting his eyes she guessed pretty correctly what he had come for.

Quick-witted Bel flew off at once, a somewhat provoking smile on her face. Ruby, horrified at the idea of a *rite-à-dieu*, made a sudden movement to follow her, but Saxon was too quick, stepping before her, and bearing the path with his tall figure.

"You can't go, child," he said, coolly.

"I must!" passionately. "Beryl will want me!"

"Not she! Alan has taken her for a walk."

"Then the aunts," she began.

"Ah, that won't do, either! They told me to come and have it out with you!"

"Have it out!" she echoed, blushing furiously. "How vulgar!"

"Perhaps so, but very expressive. Look here, child! here's a bench! Let us sit down!"

"You may," came the quick retort. "I prefer to stand."

He turned away for a minute, and the girl, fancying she saw her opportunity, made a quick dart to get past him. But, alas! a strong arm caught her, and drew her down on to the bench he had indicated.

"I am not going to stay here!" she said, rebelliously.

"Yes, you are. For the last few days you have carefully avoided me, and now I've caught you I mean to keep you—at any rate, until you answer my question!"

"Your question!" she echoed, restlessly, rolling and unrolling a long loop of ribbon on her dress.

"Yes. I wanted to ask it long ago, but you said then, 'wait till our suspense is over.' Well, I waited, and now, when I might expect to get a hearing, you hide away from me," then bending forward and looking up into the sweet, saucy face. "My question is this—will you be my wife, Ruby?"

There was a long silence. Ruby seemed quite intent on watching the tricks of a saucy sparrow that had hopped up to them. Saxon leaned back coolly and waited, his hand still on her arm.

"You heard me tell Bel," she said at last, stiffly, "that I meant to live always with the aunts—to remain one of the Desborough spinsters?"

"Oh, yes, I heard, and I thought it great nonsense! Look here, Ruby!" he went on in such passionate tones that the sparrow was startled and hopped away. "I love you with all my heart; but if you hate me, why there's an end of it. Just look at me, dear, and tell me you hate me, and I'll let you go at once!"

Again there was a silence; then the perverse little thing looked up and flashed a glance at him.

"Oh, I don't hate you!" she said, in shocked tones.

"Then, if you don't hate me!" he cried, his face beaming, "you must love me, dear!"

"Yes," she answered, pensively. "I—I suppose so!"

"You little torment!" he cried, rapturously; and, regardless of the curious sparrow which had hopped back again and was looking at them in a very knowing fashion, he

slipped his arm around her waist, and left a shower of kisses upon the pretty lips.

"Well?" said Bel, meeting them in the hall a little later on, "are you going to be a Desborough spinster?"

"No," answered Ruby, demurely. "Saxon thinks that position wouldn't suit me!"

At which humble reply Bel laughed long and merrily, as she led the blushing girl into the drawing-room, to be kissed and congratulated by the delighted little spinster aunts!

[THE END.]

Gems

THERE are so many things wrong and difficult in the world that no man can be great; he can hardly keep himself from wickedness, unless he gives up thinking much about pleasures or rewards, and gets strength to endure what is hard and painful.

THERE lives not a man on earth—out of a lunatic asylum—who has not in him the power to do good. What men want is not talent, it is purpose; in other words, not the power to achieve, but the will to labour.

THE Lord's love is the love of communicating all that He has to all His creatures, for He desires the happiness of all, and a similar love prevails in those who love Him, because the Lord is in them.

Do not read great authors solely with the view to inoculating yourself with their idea on a certain subject, but reason the matter out and form your own opinion.

TRUE goodness is like the glow worm in this, that it shines most when no eyes except those of heaven are upon it.

LEARNING teaches how to carry things in suspense without prejudice till you resolve.

PEOPLE DESTINED FOR LONG LIFE

Some people are physically and mentally capacitated for long life. They are those who seldom worry, who strive to whistle off troubles that would harass and depress other people; who are not mean or avaricious, always endeavouring to swell their savings, and sometimes losing sleep in their efforts to devise schemes to advance their selfish interests. Extremely selfish people are rarely cheerful, and are frequently moody, curt, and irritable. They are diseased in mind, and soon their bodies also become diseased, requiring medicaments to tone up their run-down systems. On the other hand, there are some persons of such noble and generous character that their nobility is reflected in their genial countenances. The world seems good to them, and they fully enjoy existence. The ordinary ills of life have very little effect upon them, and for years they appear to be either exempt from illness or survive it, as if it were but an emotion. Doctors, when called in to such genial persons, are always hopeful, assure the friends that there will be a rally soon, and would like to administer as little medicine as possible. They know that genial and cheerful patients possess remarkable recuperative power. Then there are individuals in whom the life lies low, about whose "attacks," however slight they may appear, the doctors always ominously shake their heads. Something is wanting in them which furnishes the cheerful patient with staying power; but what is that something? We say it is a good constitution, but that is not answering the question. What is it that makes a good constitution? In our opinion it is an abundance of energy. The person whose body is abundantly supplied with this is the one, other things being equal, who will live longest. Energy and vitality are the products of good digestion and assimilation, and economy in their use. Such persons are millionaires in the possession of the life-sustaining principle, and if ordinarily careful of their health are likely to live to old age.

Gleanings

THERE is no moving a dude. He is a standing joke.

RAW recruits are like butter: A warm fire puts them on the run.

THE charity that begins at home and ends at home is weak in the legs.

No one sees more of the seamy side of life than the poor dressmaker.

SAINTS are not made in a day, but sinners can be made in a moment.

IN NO HURRY.—"Poor man," said the sympathetic lady visitor, "I expect you'll be glad when your time is up, won't you?" "No, ma'am, not particularly," replied the prisoner, "I'm up for life."

THE SMALLEST SWISS CANTON.—The smallest of the Swiss cantons is Zug, about fourteen miles in length and ten in width. The population is estimated at about 21,000. It is mostly a rich and beautiful country, abounding in wheat fields and orchards. Zug, the capital of the canton, has a population of from 4,000 to 5,000 inhabitants.

DIAMONDS IN SOUTH AFRICA.—Diamonds were first discovered in South Africa in 1867 and 1869. It was not until 1870 that the rush set in to Grigoland West. Ten thousand miners encamped in 1871 in Kimberley, where, within an area of three and a half miles, nine-tenths of all the diamonds have been discovered. The diamond mines are craters of extinct volcanoes, filled with blue ground of igneous origin.

SWEET LAVENDER.—The introduction of lavender into England is due to the Huguenot refugees, who settled in the valley of the Wandle; and Lavender Hill, Lavender Sweep, and Lavender Road, in the neighbourhood of Wandsworth, attest the popularity of the plant. It is still largely cultivated in Mitcham, Croydon, Wallington, and Beddington, but all Surrey lavender comes under the name of Mitcham lavender.

LONGEVITY.—In Germany there are 778 persons who claim to be one hundred years old or more, in France there are 213, in England 146, in Scotland 46, in Norway 23, in Sweden 10, in Belgium 5, and Denmark 2. In Switzerland there is not one centenarian, but, on the other hand, there are 401 in Spain, and as many as 575 in Serbia. The oldest man in the world is said to be Bruno Cotrim, of Rio Janeiro, authentic documents showing that he is now in his 150th year.

SO NEAR AND YET SO FAR.—Fifty years ago Alexander Grant, of Glengarry, Ontario, went to California in search of gold. As nothing was heard of him within a reasonable time, a younger brother, Lewis, started out in search of him, and he, too, vanished. Then the youngest brother, Thomas, took up the quest, and, like the others, he passed from his parents' ken. Recently Alexander and Lewis accidentally met at Kalamazoo, where the child of the latter was attending a school taught by the former's daughter. Nothing has yet been heard of Thomas.

RUSSIA'S "DWELLERS UNDER THE EARTH."—A new religious sect has been started in Russia called Podpoini, or "Dwellers under the Earth." They pledge themselves to care for all fugitives from justice, vagabonds, deserters from the army, and other miserable beings, whom they hide away in clefts or holes in rocks. Those among their own people who fall sick are treated in the same way, but are left without food or drink of any kind. Every two or three days they visit the sick. Should any be dead they are buried secretly, but not before the corpse is baptised and have received a new name in order that the soul may appear spotless before the throne of Heaven.

LAMPLIGHTER ON WHEELS.—A Parisian lamplighter makes his rounds on a bicycle, with a long torch carried over the right shoulder. He guides the wheel with the left hand, and is so expert that he lights the lamps without dismounting.

FOREIGNERS IN NEW YORK.—The foreign-born element in New York city numbers 1,270,069, of whom Great Britain has contributed 365,452; Scandinavia, 49,061; the Teutonic countries, 397,642; the Latin races, 161,596; the Slavonic countries, 245,144; and Asiatic countries, 8,964.

A LONG STREAK OF LIGHTNING.—The largest induction coil, which produces the longest spark for service in wireless telegraphy, is said to be the one which was recently made for flashing messages between the coast of Japan and Korea. It can produce, in fact, a miniature streak of lightning forty-five inches in length, capable of killing any number of persons who might get in its way, and when in operation sends out something like thunder rolls. The entire apparatus weighs about 2,000 pounds.

ENGLISH SPOKEN HERE.—Here are some English signs in the windows of shops in Japan:—"The all countries boot and shoe small or fine wares." "Old curious." "Horseshoe maker instruct by French horse leech." "Cut hair shop." "If you want sell watch, I will buy. If you want buy watch, I will sell. Yes, sir, we will, all will. Come at my shop. Watchmaker." "Hatter native country." "Antemetic of nausea marina." "The house build for the manufacture of all and best kinds of hats and caps."

MARTIAL MUSIC.—A story from South Africa tells how a detachment of British soldiers recently visited a deserted Boer farm. In the sitting-room they found a piano to which a pathetic note was attached, entreating them not to smash it, as it was a present from somebody's dear mother, and consequently a souvenir which was much valued. The hard-hearted Yeomen, of course, promptly proceeded to search it, and found it crammed with gunpowder and caps.

EATING A WHOLE COD FISH.—A grocer's assistant, who boasted of having eaten an entire cod fish one Good Friday while fishing with the Newfoundland fleet, laid a wager with one of his fellow-assistants that he would repeat the exploit. He did so on Good Friday, consuming a whole salted cod. Terrible thirst then seized him. He drained off a decanter and fell unconscious to the ground. The exploit had produced inflammation of the stomach, which may prove fatal.

A MONSTER DOCK.—What will probably be the largest excavated dock in the world is now approaching completion at Rotterdam. The dock covers an area of some 150 acres, and will be brought to a preliminary depth of 14ft., which will afterwards be dredged to a depth of 28ft., so that there will be sufficient water to admit the largest steamers. The mass of earth excavated was used for the purpose of raising the adjacent streets, as well as the surrounding quays, which latter will have a total length of about 2½ miles. The dock will have sufficient capacity for sixty sea-going vessels.

WHERE TO PUT HOSEA.—"Down in South Carolina," says a member of the United States Senate, "I once attended a coloured church. The preacher, a negro, with big spectacles, was talking about the prophets. He had taken an hour to discourse upon the major prophets, and then he took up the minor ones. In course of time he reached Hosea. 'My brethren,' he exclaimed, 'we come now to Hosea. Let us consider him. Where shall we put Hosea?' At that moment an old negro, who had been peacefully slumbering in one of the back pews, woke up and looked at the pastor. 'Hosea can take my seat,' he said. 'I'm so tired that I am going home.'"

THE "SMALLEST BABY IN THE WORLD."—The "smallest baby in the world" is the latest news from America. We are told of a baby a month old which weighed exactly one pound. In every particular, even to the nails on its tiny fingers, it is perfectly developed. The mother's wedding-ring will slip over the baby's hand up to the elbow, and over the foot and up to the knee. The heart action and lung power, according to the physician in attendance, are as strong as in a normal-sized baby of the same age, and the doctor believes that the infant will live and grow up to be a handsome young woman.

A CLEVERICAL MISKE.—The Rev. M. Jones was for more than forty years a curate in Berkshire, and combined personal niggardliness with performance of duty to others. This divine never allowed his weekly outlay to go beyond half-a-crown, and wore the same suit of clothes during the whole of his prolonged ministry. The surtout with which he started was eventually reduced to a jacket, for it was first turned inside out, then tucked to hide the routs, and lastly had pieces cut off the skirts to replenish the upper portion. A fresh hat, in the fulness of years, the ingenious Mr. Jones annexed from a neighbourly and local scarecrow. And yet this unaccountable parson subscribed, regularly and liberally, to the Bible Society, to three missionary societies, as well as to the Society for the Conversion of the Jews.

HONEY FROM ORANGE BLOSSOMS.—We get many fine-quality fruits from Jamaica, foremost amongst which are oranges, bananas, pineapples, and mangoes. Now there is every prospect of a boom in Jamaica honey. Why this dainty should be of such choice quality can hardly be explained at present, though it is clear that, bees being very partial to orange-blossoms, and there being plenty of these fragrant flowers in the colony, Jamaica honey ought to be transparent, daintily flavoured, and of the highest quality. The samples of Jamaica honey that have been marketed in this country are of a light amber colour. Some are exceedingly clear and pale, and when the quality of this honey becomes generally known there will, it is believed, be little chance for some of its competitors in England.

ACTRESSES AND THEIR AGES.—M. Jules Martin, in his French theatrical handbook, has been publishing portraits of actresses. There has been no objection to this, but surely he overstepped the bounds of propriety when he accompanied each portrait with a notice giving the date of each lady's birth. So at least think the actresses, and two of them have brought a libel action against Martin, because they declare that it is an act of defamation highly damaging to their prospects to reveal their real age. One lady merely thinks of the principle involved and claims but 10d. damages, but the other demands £400. The case is shortly to come on for trial, and what will become of the wretched author if the ladies win their case, and their companions whose portraits have also appeared in Martin's book are moved to take similar proceedings?

A CINEMATOPHORE FOR THE BLIND.—An ingenious device for enabling blind persons to obtain mental impressions of motion has been made by a young French physician, Dr. F. Dussaud. As in the cinematograph, or the pictures used in the old-fashioned wheel of life, a succession of views of different stages of the thing in motion is obtained. But, instead of flat pictures, the different stages are embossed on circular sheets of tin, like the type used by the blind. For each subject two of these discs are used, and they are arranged back to back, so that the whole body, as it were, of the object in motion can be felt. When the discs have been fixed in this way in an arrangement for spinning them, and a blind person puts two of his fingers upon them, so as to feel the object in relief on both sides, the rapid succession of impressions gives a true idea of the movement represented, as with a cinematograph.

THE EYES OF THE PICTURE

By the Author of "For Silk Attire," etc., etc.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Violet Marden, stung to the quick by the neglect of the man who called himself her husband, and driven to desperation by his callous and inhuman treatment of her, in a fit of temporary madness would have made an end of her life by drowning. From such a death she was happily saved by a young man who was passing along the Embankment at the moment. Seven years have gone by, and Violet Marden, now known as Mrs. Herbert, has almost forgotten this unhappy episode. She is now quite a favourite among certain artists, and as one of her "At Homes," Leigh Erlscourt is introduced to her. Mrs. Herbert recognises him as her preserver, and would like to tell him how she has blessed him a thousand times since that day. Leigh sees Mrs. Herbert frequently, and his friends and relations are curious of his interest in a woman whose past is shrouded in mystery. Mrs. Herbert visits Leigh's studio to look at a picture he is painting. It is that of her who would have destroyed herself but for his timely aid. It is with difficulty Mrs. Herbert controls herself at this critical moment.

CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued.)

VIOLET did not look up—she scarcely cared to meet Erlscourt's eyes. But in a minute she had forced herself back into something of her everyday manner.

"Sensitive!" is the gentle word men use to describe feminine foolishness," she said, with a slight laugh. "I am ashamed of myself. Please forgive me! You see——" and she faltered a little. "I—I have suffered myself!"

"I know," said the painter. He turned from her, and took up the brush again, but his hand was not quite steady. There seemed a mist between himself and the picture.

"For a few minutes utter silence reigned in the room. Even the woman could not at once think how to break it, or whether to break it at all.

Of course in the end it was she, and not the man, who took the necessary step. And, besides, the painter's story could not rest here, she must know more. She moved a step forward so that she stood at his side.

"Mr. Erlscourt, won't you tell me the rest of your story?" she asked.

He looked at her half doubtfully, but she smiled.

"Oh, don't be afraid of me," said she. "I'll wear an adamant heart."

"I don't think you could," said Erlscourt, "but, indeed, you have heard all I know. I left England the next day; in fact, the case had delayed me; so I lost sight of the girl and know nothing further."

"Poor thing!" said Violet. "Ah well, she has made a lovely picture, and that ought to be consolation to her—only perhaps she knows nothing about it. I wonder if she remembers you as you remember her."

"I don't know. Perhaps after all she owes me little gratitude."

"You saved her life. Did she," said Violet, looking not at him, but at the girl in the picture, "did she seem like one who would forget so great a service?"

He looked at her, then followed her gaze to the picture, and again glanced at the living face. There was a light in his eyes, a smile on the curved lips.

"I don't think so," he said, rather absently; he was not thinking at all of the girl in the police-court, but of Violet Herbert's brown eyes, and the brown eyes in the portrait.

Violet moved away to some other pictures; the answer to her query had not satisfied her; and she was angry with herself for having put the question. What did it matter to her what he thought, whether of good or evil, of that unhappy creature? She was restless, ill at ease, but yet lingered, looking at this thing and that, talking of art, of music, listening to the voice that she could not but notice was even softer to her than to others—

charmed against her will, and yet yielding to the charm, also against her will. Time flew on golden wings.

"Must you go!" said Erlscourt, as her tiny watch showed him that it was near five. "Well, I must not be selfish, you have been kinder to me than I had any right to expect."

"Why, what have I done but take up your time, plagued you with questions, astonished you with my ignorance?" said Violet, opening her large eyes. "I wonder you let your love of the truth be so obscured by your love of politeness."

"Truth and politeness are hand in hand in this case," said Erlscourt. "My time is of course not mine but yours, and I am glad to have it so."

"Thanks," said she, saucily. "You have left out the plague of questions."

"Will you plague me again whenever it pleases you?" said the artist, stooping to kiss the hand she gave him.

"Ah thanks, you are too good. I have had such a pleasant afternoon. Good-bye, Mr. Erlscourt," she said, a little hurriedly.

Pleasant! what a cold word it seemed. She threw herself back in the cab, looking down at the hand his lips had touched, half shuddering while her cheek grew hot.

"He mustn't kiss my hand—he mustn't," she whispered. "It is I who should kneel at his feet, miserable wretch that I am!"

Erlscourt went back slowly to the studio; how deserted it looked—how soulless! There stood the picture on the easel, and he passed to it, folding his arms as he stood, and the thoughts in his heart did not reach his lips.

"Was there some sympathy between us," so they ran, "before we even saw each other? Why else have I painted these eyes so like hers, only Heaven grant hers may never have the look of these! Has my soul seen her before even my eyes saw her? It must be so; I will not believe it chance."

"I cannot work any more to-day," he said, half aloud. "Oh if time could be annihilated and to-morrow be to-day! How can I wait till I see her again?"

CHAPTER IX.

"You must let me bring Morton Greville to dinner one day, Emmie," Mrs. Challoner's brother had said to her not long before. He had known his sister too well to bring his friend to her house unawares, and if anyone might have done such a thing with impunity, Leigh was that person.

But no one might; Mrs. Challoner was not one of those ladies who delight in promiscuous droppings in to dinner. She liked to be prepared; but once prepared the guest was sure of a hearty welcome and minute care as to his comfort and pleasure.

So, after his warning, Erlscourt had brought his friend, or "chum," as he called him, and Greville had made his own way, not very difficult, for childless Emily had a motherly weakness for young men, and in spite of her admonitions and her horror at many of their characteristics and pursuits, spoiled them a good deal.

Besides, she looked at all young men as inferior editions of her darling, who was the delight and the pest of her life. Miss Dora, who though a country girl was very sharp and apprehensive, divined another reason for Emily's kindly reception of young Greville.

"Cousin Emily," said the astute young woman to herself, "is in a chronic fever over that brother of hers, and the fever has taken an aggravated form since the advent of Mrs. Herbert. She looks on Mr. Greville as a sort of universal intelligencer."

Dora was not ill-pleased herself at the position Greville acquired. She showed it to-night when he was coming to dine, and afterwards escort the ladies to the theatre, in feminine fashion, by putting on a gown every one considered highly becoming. A somewhat heightened colour, as she descended to the drawing-room, added to her appearance.

"Have you seen Leigh to-day, Mr. Greville?" asked Mrs. Challoner, as they all seated themselves at table.

Mr. Challoner, serving out soup with practised rapidity, laughed.

"That's always my wife's first thought, Greville," said he. "Leigh first, and the rest of the world nowhere—it's a good thing he's so fine tempered."

Emily joined good-naturedly, as she always did, in the laugh against herself; she was proud of her favouritism.

"I believe you're jealous of Leigh, Cousin Arthur," said Dora, saucily.

"Be quiet, you impudent puss!" retorted her cousin. "Now, Greville, won't you tell my wife that Leigh has managed to get through the day without her assistance?"

"I believe I can say that," answered Greville, "Mrs. Challoner, it's a shame to laugh at you. I wish every fellow had someone to be always thinking about him."

This sentimentally uttered speech roused Dora's youthful flippancy. She laughed merrily. Greville, half-meaning the speech for her, was inclined to be vexed, but her laughter was infectious, and he was obliged to give up his pique. It did not make the two any the worse friends.

"Did Leigh say he was coming to-night?" asked Mrs. Challoner.

"He wasn't sure. I gave him your message—that here was plenty of room in our box, but he seemed to have half-promised to join someone in the stalls."

"It's a pity to waste a place," said Mr. Challoner, "since I could not go. Wish I could, instead of poring over 'the said A. B.,' and I've half a mind to spoil sport, Dora, and make you play clerk to me."

"I'll stop," said she, heroically, looking as happy and mischievous as a puppy.

"Oh, no!" cried Greville. "That's too bad, Mr. Challoner," and the energetic protest made Dora look happier than ever.

The first act at the Haymarket was over when Dora, leaning over to look down into the stalls, turned delightedly to Emily.

"There's Leigh," said she—for, of course, formalities had been speedily dropped. "Bad fellow! he doesn't see us. He's too busy bowing to someone else. Who is it?"

"Mrs. Herbert, I think," said Greville, who had caught the direction in which his friend had been looking. "I'll go and fetch Erlscourt, if you like, Miss Maine."

"Oh, do—no—he won't come," said Dora. "He saw me just now, and I signalled him to come, and he shook his head. Perhaps he will presently."

Mrs. Challoner had meanwhile been quietly directing her opera glass to every imaginable place where the obnoxious Mrs. Herbert could or could not be, including the flies.

After so much trouble it was rather aggravating to hear Greville say:—

"Mrs. Herbert has gone. I saw her leave just now."

Mrs. Challoner looked at once down into the stalls.

Yes! there was the curly head she was looking for.

"I am so sorry she's gone," said Dora. "I so wanted to see her! Leigh said she was so pretty."

"My dear Dora," said Emily, "I don't imagine Mrs. Herbert is the sort of person you could associate with."

"What's the harm in her?" asked the young lady. "You know her, Mr. Greville—does she bite? Cousin Emily thinks she does. And Mrs. Harrington goes there!"



VIOLET LOOKED UP, SURPRISED, BUT PLEASED TO FIND ERLSCOURT AT HER SIDE.

This was unfortunate, as Greville knew Mrs. Harrington not to be over particular as to her society.

"I don't see any harm in Mrs. Herbert," said he; "though people do talk about her. I don't see what cause she gives for scandal."

"Who is she?" asked Emily. "Who was her husband?"

"I really don't know, Mrs. Challoner, but I am sure no one could fail to see she is a perfect lady. As to her husband, she never speaks of him. I suppose he is dead. There may be a hundred reasons for her silence about him, and I don't think people ought to spring to an evil one directly," said Greville, flushing a little.

The flush deepened as he encountered Dora's eyes fixed on him with a look of half-shy approval.

"You're like Leigh," said Emily, "you champion a pretty woman who no doubt knows how to keep you all at her feet."

"She never flirts, Mrs. Challoner," said Greville, with extreme eagerness, and glancing at Dora, "not even with Leigh, who is there often."

No sooner had the unlucky words fallen from his lips than he saw he had made a mistake. Mrs. Challoner's face was, just for an instant, a study. She pursed up her lips as she said, after that awful second:

"A woman with unknown antecedents, living alone, not in society."

The terrible indictment dropped out like lead. What could be said worse against Violet Herbert after that?

"What is the attraction?"

"She's pretty—she's charming—she's musical—there is not a word to be said against her," began Greville, in hot defence, when Dora, who had not seemed to be listening, just turned her head and looked at him. The warning was almost too late. Mrs. Challoner had caught one word that, like a fuse, fired a whole train.

"And I suppose Leigh plays with her?" she said, fixing her eyes on Greville's face.

"I really don't know. I believe he has done so sometimes," answered the young man rather confusedly.

"Be quiet," said Dora, imperatively, "the curtain's rising."

Not to the stage, however, though the play was attractive, did Emily turn her eyes oftenest. She watched that stall beneath with untiring persistency, and so frequently was she satisfied by the sight of the same form sitting there that at last she began to breathe freely. She attended to the play, it interested her. At last the curtain dropped. Amidst the clapping and cheers, Dora's whisper to Greville sounded clear and sharp,—

"Leigh has gone!"

"That dreadful woman!" thought Mrs. Challoner, in the strongest italics. It looked all so plain to her—what had happened, and yet it was so utterly different from the truth. That dreadful woman had known he was coming and had let him see her there, and then gone away, and he had followed her. That was settled. In truth, Erlscourt had seen Violet in a box with Mrs. Harrington and her husband. Erlscourt had resisted the desire to go to her box because he knew his sister was in the house, but he had managed, notwithstanding, to see every movement of Violet's. He had seen her glance over the house, half-searchingly, with a smile on her lips; he had seen the smile fade and her eyes grow wild and startled, and her cheek become white. He had turned his head swiftly, instinctively, to see what had caused that sudden change, and had no satisfaction beyond gazing at rows of inoffensive faces, male and female.

Still apparently bent on the play, he had known that Violet sat pale and drooping, feigning interest and pleasure, and the man had bit his lip and there had shot into his heart a jealous pang and a terrible doubt. If he could have gone to her, been beside her! And

then she had bent towards her companions and said something, and risen up, taking Harrington's arm, and the two had left the box. Presently Harrington had come back alone. Erlscourt sat motionless, eating his very heart out; the bright clever piece, half fun, half pathos, jarred unbearably. What or who had she seen—what vision had scared her—what past had come back to her? Racked beyond the limits of utmost patience, he had got up at last, made an excuse to his friend, and left the theatre—not to follow Violet but simply because he could not bear himself. And yet Emily's theory fitted in very nicely—as theories often do and are quite wrong all the same.

Morton Greville declined the invitation to return to supper at Hamilton Terrace, and had just put his charges into their hired brougham, and held Dora's hand a little longer than he need have done, and turned away, when someone slapped him on the shoulder.

"Going my way, Mr. Greville?" said Gilbert Venner's deep tones.

"Depends what your way is," answered the young man.

"I thought of taking a turn at King's," said Venner, carelessly. "It's too early to go home—will you come? Just a game or two, and then our virtuous couches."

"Don't mind if I do," said Greville, but hesitatingly. "It's a good while since I've been at King's. Shall we walk?"

"Yes—it isn't far. I say, that was a deuced pretty girl you put in the carriage," said Venner, with a sly smile that in most men would have been only fun, but in him was offensive.

"Yes," said Greville, shortly. "A relation of Challoner, the K.C. How's the club getting on?"

"Flourishing, my son!" answered Venner. "But you're such a well-behaved one!—you don't know much about it."

Greville lighted a cigar, without being in the least ashamed by that remark.

"I don't care for that sort of club," said he, offering his companion his cigar-case. "Lots of gambling, Venner. Besides, I've got my way to make. I'm not a gentleman at large like you."

"Ah! well, you've got an incentive to work," said Venner. "Lucky dog!"

Greville's haughty stare was all the answer he got, and he changed the subject till they reached "King's," the doors of which swung invitingly open, and showed the interior blazing with light.

CHAPTER X.

If Mrs. Challoner had known the real facts of Erlscourt's departure from the theatre, perhaps she would not have resolved that very night on speaking to him.

As it was she was so sure she was right—she had so relegated wronged, pure-hearted Violet to the outer darkness of womanhood, and she so little understood the wisdom of not fanning a smouldering flame, that she sought the earliest opportunity for her task.

As often happens, the opportunity dropped into her hands.

Erlscourt called the very next afternoon in Hamilton Terrace—perhaps with a vague idea of diverting any suspicions in his sister's mind.

He had no weak fear of her, but he had a fear of her probing a raw wound.

And, poor fellow, the wound bled sorely that day.

It took all his pride and strong will to preserve his usual demeanour when he entered his sister's drawing-room; but even then he could not hide the physical signs of extreme paleness, and a tired look about the eyes.

"My dear boy," said his sister, kissing him, "how glad I am to see you!"

"That's nothing new, my sweetest old Mentor," said Erlscourt, "you always are glad. Where's Miss Mischief?"

"Dora? She went to Arthur's chambers this morning. He was to take her to lunch and then show her the Temple and the Law Courts. She won't be back till dinner, can't you stop till then?"

"Perhaps I will, if you'll overlook morning dress. Well," said he, choosing, as he usually did, the most comfortable lounging chair in the room; "how did you like the play?"

"Very much," she gave him a sort of gauging glance, and hesitated; but before she could speak Erlscourt struck in quickly:—

"Dora liked it; anyhow, she looked happy enough. How long does she stay?"

"All the season. It is her first long visit to London. Arthur and I are very glad to have her."

"She's a dear little soul," said Erlscourt, in an elder brother manner; "but Arthur is such a good fellow I don't see how any one of his blood could be disagreeable; I wish you'd bring Dora over to my place, Emmie. It turned wet last time, you remember, and you are such a piece of propriety you won't let her come by herself. I don't see why she shouldn't."

"I do, Leigh," frigidly. "I am afraid you are getting very Bohemian, as you call it. Pray don't forget the customs of ladies in good society. Why didn't you come up to our box last night?" she added, while Erlscourt opened his brown eyes and wished he had been endowed with prophetic powers.

"I should if I had stopped, but I left early. You were in good hands, I knew."

"Yes; Mr. Greville is very pleasant and nice," said Mrs. Challoner. "Weren't you well that you left so soon?"

"Quite, thanks; when am I anything else?"

"Then you work too hard," said Emily, beating about the bush in an aggravating manner. "You look tired and pale."

If Erlscourt had not possessed that generosity of temper that belongs to some strong

natures, he might have turned restive at these words.

There is nothing more annoying than to have your outward signs of weakness planted upon you when you are so perfectly conscious of them yourself.

"Well, if I am a little tired," said he, good-humouredly, "that's just the reason for having a rest. Do let a fellow alone, Mentor. I shall return to my old name for you. How you did haul me over the coals when I was at Eton!"

She smiled; she could not help it at the recollection of the handsome mischief-loving lad who was always up to pranks, who listened to her scoldings and laughed and kissed her, and sprang away to some other "lark," not in the least impressed, following his own wilful way.

The boy seemed only to have developed, not changed, an strong-willed, as impossible a subject for anger.

"I am not going to do that now," she said, "but I confess I did want to speak to you seriously, Leigh, and you must not be angry with me; that you never are, though, but you laugh at me often."

"What is the momentous point?" said the painter; the hand lying on the arm of the chair; lying lightly and carelessly, pressed itself closer into the soft velvet.

"About—well, dear," said Emily, somewhat embarrassed, "I fancy you are getting into friendships not quite desirable."

"One friendship, Emily," said Erlscourt, quietly, "that is what you mean. Well, what is against it?"

"I was alluding to Mrs. Herbert. I believe she was at the Haymarket last night."

"I know—well? Please to be logical, Emmie dear."

"Oh, Leigh," cried Emily, "can't you see how anxious you are making me? Who is this woman at whose house you are so often, about whom no one knows anything, who lives in such an anomalous way? Last night even no sooner does she leave the theatre than you leave too!"

"To follow her?" said Erlscourt, who had flushed darkly at his sister's first words. "So that is what has been troubling you?" he went on, banteringly; "you couldn't imagine a man of thirty could take care of himself, and Greville has been telling you that the best part of my time is passed at Mrs. Herbert's house—that I play with her, sing with her! Poor Mentor! As a matter of fact, I did not follow her. You have fitted in your theory capitably, Emmie, but it is only theory. If you want to know where I went last night, I walked home."

"Well, I was wrong there, I see, and I am glad of it. But why go to her house so much?"

"Because it's one of the pleasantest houses I know," said he carelessly.

"Pleasant! You meet all sorts of people there."

"Exactly; that's part of the attraction, people just as good as I am in a social point of view, and better in most other things—artists and professional people. I am professional myself."

"It was not that I meant. I am the last person to set myself up on the score of position. But young men don't go repeatedly to the same house merely for pleasant companionship. I only want to show you, dear Leigh, what danger of entanglement there may be in such an association. For aught you know, Mrs. Herbert's husband may be living! A woman absolutely without credentials. Do you know anything of her?"

"Next to nothing. But men are not like women, Emmie. I don't ask leave to introduce her to you or Dora." He set his teeth as he finished. "I believe in her truth."

"Of course she will tell you what she likes about herself."

"Emmie, you are trying my patience a little

too far," said Erlscourt. "I can't see with your eyes, but don't blame me for that. Why you should look on Mrs. Herbert as an adventuress I don't know; she is not one. I must choose my own friends, Emmie."

"Friends!" said Emily, so vexed as to grow bitter, "a friend you cannot introduce to your sister—a woman who may not even have been married."

Erlscourt sprang to his feet, his coolness gone, his dark eyes ablaze.

"Emmie, be silent!" he cried fiercely, "you madden me!"

The work she had held dropped from her hands. She looked up into his face, so startled that she forgot the delicate lace lying on the floor. Erlscourt stooped and picked it up, putting it back on her knee.

"Forgive me, Emmie," he muttered, "I forgot myself." He did not wait for an answer, but went back to his place and sat down again. "Your warning is too late!" he said, under his breath.

"Oh, Leigh, no—oh! don't say that! Think what such words mean! What can be the end of it all?"

"I don't know."

"But you must have thought," said practical Emily.

She had not loved in this fashion herself. She did not understand why there should be such war in the heart of a man of such stainless birth and so firm a will. But she sympathized with his evident suffering, though her sympathy might be blind.

"At your age a man, when he falls in love, thinks definitely of marriage. You do not even know if she is free."

Erlscourt winced at the stab she had not an idea she was giving.

Had not he thought it all out last night? Had not wave after wave of doubt swept over him?

"Draw back while there is time," went on the unconscious, merciless tormentor. "If nothing has passed between you, as I hope is the case—"

"Oh, Emmie!" cried Erlscourt, passionately, "you can never have loved to talk like that to me—I will not—I cannot! Heaven knows if I have the right to love her—but if I knew I had not I must love her just the same! How could I know when I saw her she was to be to me the one woman I could worship and die for? How can a man wrench out from his heart a love Heaven put there? It is not sin; it could never be sin! You judge as the world judges. Because she is young and alone, and does not do by line and rule what others do, you think she cannot be as pure as yourselves. Because she is silent about the past you decide that her past is stained! Do you think,"—he had risen, too stirred and excited to be still—"that I have never thought of all that you have said to me? But I have never doubted her. I know she has never sinned! I scarcely know I loved her till the love was beyond recall—and I would not recall it if I could."

"Do you mean to say," said Mrs. Challoner, "that, supposing her to be free, you would marry—you, so gently born—a woman whose birth may be of the lowest?"

"It cannot be that. You would not dream so for an instant if you saw her," said Erlscourt, shrinking from facing a "yes" or "no" to that question.

"Don't disappoint me, Leigh," said Mrs. Challoner, earnestly. "I don't understand you at all, and a great deal of what you have said seems to me wrong and wild. You will not give up this infatuation for a woman who may be bound—who ought not to encourage you. In any case you risk your happiness—dearer to me than my own. If you marry her it is a risk; if you cannot you remember her always, and that is sin."

"Emmie," said Erlscourt, in a low voice, "I will not forget honour."

She looked puzzled. She had not contemplated the danger of his position—its openness to dire temptation, as he thought she did.

She had a vague confidence that somehow he was more immaculate than other men, though why he should have been so set apart by Providence she could not have told.

"I am not afraid of that," she said, proudly. "You trust me more than I trust myself then!" he said, half bitterly.

"Of course I trust you. Honour is dearer to you than anything else," said the woman whose placid nature and sheltered life had shut her out from comprehension or sight of the temptations that wreck life and soul. "I wish you would promise me."

"I will make no promises," said Erlscourt, quickly.

"Don't be so impetuous, Leigh. I am not going to ask you to keep away from Mrs. Herbert's house, but make no pledges, say nothing to her."

"I cannot promise," he said again, at once. "Emmie, I don't blame you; in your place I might think the same as you do. I know this must seem a madness, a cruelty to you. I sometimes think so myself. I can see your side clearly. I can go with it partly; but it all comes back to the one thing, I love her! What use to measure that love, to say how much or how little! I don't know myself. I only know that she has glorified all life, that if I never saw her again, I should still thank Heaven I had loved her!"

It was all pure rhapsody to Emily. Of course, she was much in the right; of course, as a matter of sense and worldly wisdom, Erlscourt had little to say.

Outsiders cannot be expected to believe in love's intuitions, whatever the lover may do; nine times out of ten, the intuitions play false.

But the tenth time there may be a love that possesses heart and soul and dominates the whole life; that love has a power divine.

Still, Emily could not be justly expected to discern such love; it was not her fault that her eyes were hidden.

She thought the whole thing exaggerated, that Leigh made a tragedy out of an ordinary drama, that he would calm down and be reasonable.

She failed in sympathy because she thought the suffering unconsciously unreal. And Erlscourt felt that keenly, felt, at a very lonely period, that he was misunderstood, thought rhapsodical and a dreamer, under the thrall of a worthless woman.

He felt the sting of one who, in a moment of passion, has opened his soul to dull ears; he was chilled and wounded. A touch of sympathy would have been worth all the wise advice in the world. He came to his sister and leant over her chair.

"Emmie, forgive me what I said to you, you could not know how you hurt me," he said, bending his face down to hers. "And don't love me less. I cannot make you understand me; perhaps that is my fault. Don't speak to me again about this—it is no use. I must bear my own burdens, heavy or light; and if a word is said against Violet I cannot bear it, and neither can I bear to quarrel with you!" "My darling," she said, kissing him, "we shall never quarrel. Must I see you go on in this folly and be silent?"

"Nothing you could say would change me, and who knows but it might estrange us? I may lose so much; let me keep what I can. Keep your own counsel; don't tell Arthur. I won't stop to-night, Emmie."

She caught his hand. "Leigh!"

He drew his hand away quickly, with a flash of something like displeasure in his eyes and a half laugh.

"Pooh! I am not going to her. I am not much in the humour for a lady's drawing-room. Good-bye, Mentor."

Emily went back to her lace-work and mused not hopelessly.

"My own boy, he is not happy; yet it may not last, this madness. I think I see my way; it's a common-enough story—a designing

woman—for, of course, she is that, and a romantic fellow like Leigh. All the world being against her is quite enough to make him her sworn knight. Horrid creature! I could almost hate her!"

CHAPTER XI.

Verily if ever a man needed some drop of comfort it was Leigh Erlscourt when, after leaving his sister's house, he reached his own home. The unpalatable truths, so hardly put before him, pressed in upon his soul. Though not new to him, yet they took an acuter power of torture when cut and dried into so many words.

Did he need to be told that a woman of such doubtful position was not the wife for him? Did it help him to show him in all their nakedness the palpable objections to her? The only answer he could make was no answer at all; that he loved her only proved him blind and folly stricken; it did not prove her immaculate. He had nothing to turn to; he was like a man who has been forced to leave his shelter and stand solitary in a pitiless storm.

Behind him was the feverish happiness that had never been peace; before him almost a blank, for he had nothing to build on. The slightest advance beyond mere friendship had made Violet shrink with a sort of dread, till he dared scarcely venture look or word. He had rarely seen her alone—save during their musical practices, and these of late had been often interrupted. Now he began to think all this had been by design, and of course the memory of last night in the theatre only added to his thousand fears.

Yes, he had been very happy in Violet's presence; away from her, restless and unsatisfied, but even that happiness, such as it was, was done with. Unless he could gain all—and how little he hoped for that—he must lose all! He started up at the mere thought, flinging off his intense dejection.

"No, I cannot—I will not lose! Can a few hard words have turned me coward! I will see her to-night. To-night! I remember she will not be alone. No matter—if only I see her, touch her hand!"

It was not yet dusk; the clear summer evening shone radiant over the park, children's voices, shrill and merry, echoed through the still air. Erlscourt, too impatient to walk, stopped the first hansom he saw, with a promise of extra fare if the man drove quickly.

Lucie, who admitted the artist, smiled brightly; he was a favourite with Violet's shrewd maid.

"You needn't announce me," said Erlscourt, as quietly as he could when every nerve was quivering, and Lucie nodded and withdrew, muttering to herself that she couldn't make the mistress out.

Quickly Erlscourt entered the familiar room; he drew breath more easily when once he was within the charmed atmosphere, and when the young hostess, seeing him, came forward, all his agony of an hour ago seemed like a farce, a dream, yet it had left its impress. At first he could not say a word, while he kept her hands, closing both his over them with the unconscious hold of possession. It was but a second; perhaps Violet's slowly rising colour recalled him to himself.

"I have taken advantage of your friendship, you see," he said.

"You are always welcome," said Violet, in an even, almost placid, way. "I told you I should have a few friends to-night. I think you know them all, don't you?"

Just common-place society phrases, and his heart was burning within him, and hers was trembling and fainting. Yet the one went amongst the guests, smiling, with a word for each, the other turned sweetly to a presumably musical young lady and begged the favour of a song.

Later in the evening someone proposed cards; Violet assented, but asked to be excused from playing.

"Why, Violet?" asked Annie Harrington. "Come, no nonsense; we must have you."

"Indeed no! I never play cards."

"I know you never have, but it's never too late to mend."

"I am so stupid at them," said Violet. "You have enough without me, and I am tired to-night." She kept glancing in a nervous way at the cards lying on the table, and then instinctively her large eyes went to Erlscourt, where he stood a few steps away. How appealing they looked! How plainly they said:

"I am sick at heart to-night—help me!"

He came forward.

"I picked up a new game the other night," he said, addressing no one in particular. "I wish you'd let me show it you. Mrs. Herbert, you never play, so it's no good trying to teach you. There's your favourite chair in the conservatory; please go and sit there; you can look at the sky while we gamble."

He led her half laughingly to the seat in the conservatory, where the scented air was very refreshing, saw her placed there, and then went back to the table. It was to him banishment, and he hated the cards—if he could have hated anything that helped him to save her. Violet sat, leaning her head on her hand, listening to the chatter and laughter from the other end of the room, often quietly watching one face at the table, often with her eyes turned to the darkening sky and her thoughts busied with heavier matters than any there guessed.

Presently Erlscourt started at a touch on his shoulder and looked up into Morton Greville's face.

"You here, old fellow!" he said.

"Don't you see me? I say, you're going wrong, Erlscourt," said Greville, taking a card from the painter's hand. "You pretend to be teaching the others."

"Well, then," said Erlscourt, with a curious smile curling his lip, "take my place; you know the game better than I do."

He rose, and before Greville could resist, pushed him down into his chair.

"But I haven't paid my respects yet," said Morton, agitated.

"I'll pay them for you. I'll come and see how you get on presently."

He walked off coolly, giving no time for remonstrance, and, crossing to Violet, took his place by her side. Greville looked after him, suppressed a remark, and speedily engaged the attention of the card-players.

And Erlscourt had gained Elysium. Violet turned her soft face to him.

"You need not thank me," said the painter before she could speak. "Is it not my whole duty and pleasure to serve you?" with an intensity of earnestness underlying the words. Any one of the men about her would have said more. The look in the dark eyes bent on her brought the vivid colour to her cheek. Yet she turned from him as she answered almost coldly:

"It is very good of you to say so, I am sure." Then, as if she feared she had overdone it, she added, lightly:

"How did you know I was going to thank you at all? I might have thought the service needed none."

"You would thank me because you cannot but be generous; but my service is due whether it is acknowledged or not," answered Erlscourt following her lead. For once more he had felt himself repelled. Yet she had appealed to him when she wanted only a trifling assistance. "Are you tired to-night? I fancied you were."

"I am tired," she said, and paused; with a covert glance at him to see how he had understood that involuntary pause. She added directly, "Isn't that reason enough for preferring to sit here near the flowers and look at that lovely sky to turning over those horrid bits of painted cardboard?"

"I hate them!" she said with a startling change in voice and manner. "How can they sit for hours over them! Pleasure! what a miserably abused word it is!"

Something had stirred her out of her usual reserve and quiet. Erlscourt's thoughts sprang back to last night. Was the cause to be found then?

"I did not know you had such a horror of them," he said, "though of course I noticed you never played. Why, forgive me, why do you allow in your own house what pains you?"

"What else do some of them care for?" she said, bitterly. "What does it matter what is done here?"

"You must not say that," said Erlscourt, quickly. "Don't speak so!"

"Why not?" She looked at him, and her eyes filled suddenly.

"I don't know what sort of humour I am in to-night," she said, drooping her head. "I didn't mean to pain you."

"Do you think you can say such things of yourself and not pain me? And since you have touched the subject, may I say what I have had so long in my mind—that you wrong yourself—that others wrong you and judge you by those about you?"

"Ah, but I must," she said, pressing her hands tightly together. "I know it, but what does it matter?"

"Does it not matter," said Erlscourt, forcing himself to speak without overt passion, "that you are looked down on—that you are reckoned as one with people you should not know? I have no right to speak so to you, but I cannot help it. I cannot bear for you to injure yourself and let the world dare to pass you by with scorn! There cannot be a must."

Just so he had pleaded years ago—just so had the whole pure loyal soul of the man looked from the deep brown eyes, yet there was a difference. Then he was only pleading to be allowed to help. She was not a girl now; she had suffered almost all she could suffer, and she knew what lay beneath this pleading—knew that had they been alone, he had been kneeling at her feet, and praying for the right to shield her from a breath of scorn!

"Why must you!" repeated Erlscourt, more gently, while she sat crushed and silent. "You do not answer. Have I angered you?"

"No, but I cannot explain," she answered, and shivered.

"If I have said too much, forgive me," said Erlscourt, softly.

Again the tremor shook her.

She set her lips in a desperate resolve.

"Mr. Erlscourt, I am not angry, I am very grateful," she said, "but it is not the same for me as it would be for the woman of your world. You are generous and kind; you must make allowances for me, I am not reckless!"

Even while her lips blackened herself, her heart cried out against the fiat in those words she had not meant to say, "But—but it does not hurt me."

"Hush, Violet!" said Erlscourt, in so strained a voice that it did not sound like his own, and her name, too!

She sprang up suddenly, with a careless laugh.

"I have left my other guests too long," she said. "Come, Mr. Erlscourt, I am tired of one place, if you are not."

Whatever words would have rushed to his lips were stayed effectually. He followed her silently to the table; he even joined in a game, though he scarcely knew what cards were in his hand, and played mechanically. His heart was on fire, his brain dizzy, his faith clinging frantically to its idol. He bore the jesting and merriment as long as he could, but the limit was reached at last, and he rose abruptly. "Going?" said Violet, standing at Mrs. Harrington's side.

"It is late," he said, smiling, "and I can't be idle to-morrow. Good-night."

"I don't believe you," his eyes said plainly as they looked straight into hers, till they were forced to droop. She flushed all over and turned away.

When all had gone and the lights were out

Lucie, going to attend on her mistress, found her looking white and worn out.

"Lucie," said Violet, slowly, taking the jewels from her ears and throat, "if Mr. Erlscourt comes to-morrow, I am not at home."

"Mr. Erlscourt, ma'am?" said the maid, in extreme surprise.

"Yes."

"Is that all I am to say, ma'am?"

"Yes, just say that; and whenever he comes, till I rescind the order. See that the other servants understand that!"

"Hadn't I better say you are not well, ma'am?" said the accommodating Lucie. "Mr. Erlscourt comes as he likes; he'll think it so odd!"

"No," said Violet, sternly, "no untruths. Never mind what he thinks!"

But when Lucie was gone, and she was alone in the dark, she pressed her face into her pillow with sobs that seemed rending her life. The shame of it, the bitter shame!

If she could blot out the long years and be an innocent girl again, and walk fearlessly by the side of this man who loved her!

"Why not do it now?" the tempter whispered. "You do him no wrong, you may just as likely be free as not; you will never be claimed, and you have not sinned, therefore you do not abuse his trust. Put your hand in his when he asks for it, as he will; you cannot escape him."

"Tell him nothing; he will not want to know; he will have perfect faith. Is it just that your life and his should be ruined for another's ruthless crime?"

"You have been wrong in allowing this lover of yours to come and go; you must atone for your blindness or weakness, and that is by giving him yourself. You cannot in justice make him suffer!"

"Father above, is there no help!" the tossed, tempted soul cried, in its terrible anguish. "Don't forsake me, don't let me go! I am guilty, not he; don't let me shame him. He trusts me still, and I have wrecked his life!"

So sobbing and praying till she was exhausted, she slept at last, a sleep full of dreams, in which she was always in some dire peril, and Leigh was trying to help her and could not.

(To be continued next week.)

Useless Women

It is an unflinching theme—old as creation—the faults of women! No doubt Adam harped on it on rainy days, when there was nothing to be done at gardening, and perhaps he had some cause for complaint, for every intelligent person will admit that he was sadly taken in by that metamorphosed rib of his.

Nowadays, wherever you go, you hear the same doleful story. Young men are afraid to marry because the young women are so useless. All they are fit for is to dress up like dolls, and sit in the parlour, and thrum the helpless piano.

Well, who is to blame?

Not the young ladies themselves, most assuredly. Somebody says it is their mothers, but we don't think so.

Doesn't everybody know that the young men of the present day want the young women to be useless. Don't they want them to dress up and sit in the parlour? Don't they praise their unsunned foreheads and their lily hands, and admire the sweep of their silken trails, and the glitter of their jewellery?

The pretty talk that we hear sometimes about girls helping their mothers in the kitchen is beautiful on paper, but who expects anything of the kind from a young lady?

Baking bread, and preparing preserves, and sweeping, and making beds, are not conducive to white hands and delicate complexions; and when it comes to washing clothes and scrubbing floors—why, good gracious! that is awful!

Young men never go into the kitchens to watch their darlings make pies and black stoves—anywhere out of novels; they don't want to, and the girls don't want them to! They all know that Maggie looks like any scullion without her powder; and smut on her face is not becoming; and sweat and steam will take her hair out of curl; and strawberries and peaches, however delicious they may be to the palate, put one's finger ends in hopeless mourning.

No; the young man of the present day when he calls on the young lady expects to sit in the softest corner of the sofa, and Maggie is expected to be dressed like one of the last fashion plates, with all sorts of jimeracks by way of ornamentation.

Just listen a moment to the conversation of our young men as they smoke their cigars in front of their clubroom and watch the ladies pass by.

"There goes Miss B. Deuced stylish-looking girl; grooms her hair well; dresses in elegant taste; plays a tip-top game of ping-pong, too."

"There comes Miss C. Drab and wine-colour; striking costume; got a handsome foot, and not afraid to show it. By George! a fellow needn't be ashamed to drive out with such a stylish-looking woman!"

When little Miss D. passes by in her plain dress, with nobody's dingy hair on but her own, and a hat full a year behind the fashion, all the "fellows" stare at her, and make remarks about one's grandmother, and Noah's ark, and wonder the proprietor of some freak show isn't after her. Not one of them says anything about the fact that she is a sensible woman, and has spent her life in the kitchen cooking and mending for her father and half-a-dozen young brothers and sisters. Oh, no! And yet men are all the time crying out that they want sensible women for wives.

Then why don't they get them?

The sensible girls of this generation will mostly be old maids, because men go in for the girls who giggle the most, who are dashing, who sport the most false hair, and who pad the most atrociously. And really, it has been so long since a real woman, as God made her, has been in the fashion that we doubt if the men of to-day would know to what species she belonged if they should suddenly behold her.

Gentlemen say, "Oh, ladies ought to dress with more simplicity!"

Suppose you try the sweet simplicity dodge, young ladies, and go to a ball or a party in the traditional scant-skirted white muslin with blue ribbons, and your hair au naturel.

You will have the pleasure of playing wall-floer to the end of the chapter.

If anybody thinks dress is of no consequence, just let her get into a railway carriage with a faded gown, and an old jacket, and last year's bonnet on. All the men will be reading newspapers. They will be very deeply absorbed. The papers that day will be particularly interesting. The last scandal in aristocratic life or the last murder trial will be especially fascinating. You may stand there with your arms full of packages, and shift from one foot to the other, and stagger against their backs at every lurch of the train, until the crack of doom, before any of these gentlemen, who are crying out for plainly-dressed woman, will give you a seat.

Next day you just go and dress up in your new summer silk, with its frills and flounces, and your stylish blouse, and your charming Paris hat, and your delicate gloves, and your fashionably-arranged hair, and go into a railway carriage, and half-a-dozen gentlemen will forget that a newspaper ever existed, and insist that they greatly prefer standing to sitting.

If men really desire women to be sensible, they must encourage them to be so. They must have the courage to be polite to ladies who are not dressed in the height of fashion, and show by their conduct that they want them sensible, pure-minded, and useful.

THE GOLDEN HOPE

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Lady Redwoode, the owner and undisputed proprietor of all the fair domain of Redwoode, has been left a widow a year or more previous to the opening of the story. Lord Redwoode left no heir, but expressed a wish that on the decease of his wife the estates should pass to their nephew, Andrew Forsythe, and never doubted Lady Redwoode's compliance with his wishes. Mr. Forsythe was musing over many things, and wondering what would happen to him should his aunt marry again. Judge then of his surprise when Lady Redwoode tells him the story of her early life. Secretly married when quite a girl, in order not to arouse the anger of her brother, with whom she was living in India, there came a day when it was necessary to tell all, and the scene that followed caused Lady Redwoode to fall into convulsions, and she lay ill for many weeks. On returning to life and consciousness, it was to find herself a widow and a mother.

Sir Richard Haughton, although but twenty-seven, has lost all joy in life through an unhappy marriage. News is brought to him that his divorced wife, Margaret Sorel, is dying, and the messenger eagerly begs an interview on the pretext that Margaret desires Sir Richard's forgiveness. Margaret fails to rekindle the old love, and swears that no other woman shall ever become his wife.

Now Lady Redwoode's brother is dead, and as an act of reparation has sent all the necessary proofs of her first marriage, but the secret of the identity of her own child dies with him. The two girls are coming to England, and it is for Lady Redwoode to discover which of the two is her daughter. After a little hesitation in coming to so momentous a decision, the choice falls on Cecile, who at once sets to work to ingratiate herself with Lady Redwoode at the expense of her foster-sister Hellice, and in this she is ably seconded by the Hindoo ayah. Cecile's relationship is proclaimed to the assembled household; and to Hellice, who watches this rejoicing without one pang of envy, there suddenly comes a feeling of loneliness, and she turns unobserved into the garden to seek comfort among the shade of the trees. It is thus that she discovers Sir Richard Haughton, who for one moment gazes on the lovely vision ere it is lost to view. "I must see her again," he says, "Whoever and whatever she is I recognise her as my fate."

CHAPTER XL.—Continued.



HE gate was shut as he came up; he paused before it, and leaned against the high stone wall, resting and looking back, believing that he heard steps in pursuit. His suspicions were correct. Sandy was flying along the road after him, and behind the half-witted lad came Mrs. Hartley, frightened into a state of mind little superior to that of her servant.

In the distance was seen the good minister, walking as fast as his strength would permit, and two or three labourers and their wives were also approaching, curious to learn the cause of the singular and unusual disturbance at that hour in their lonely valley.

Mr. Anchester became furious.

Rage against the innocent maiden who had defeated his schemes filled his soul. He swore to take her back and marry her within the hour. He lifted the latch of the gate, muttering fearful oaths, but the portal would not open to his touch. It was securely locked and barred from within.

Hellice had been wiser than he thought.

"Curse the girl!" he shouted, with the fury of a demon. "Here, you rascal!" and he made a commanding gesture to the approaching Sandy. "Hasten those men yonder, and help me beat this gate in! Do you hear?"

Sandy was obliged to obey. The labourers quickened their steps, and, unheeding the fearful remonstrances of the housekeeper, a vigorous assault was made upon the stout oak gate. Heavy stones and a wooden bar found in the vicinity were brought into requisition, and plied heavily to remove the obstruction. No one dared to gainsay Mr. Anchester's commands.

The valley labourers recognised him as their master, and dreaded to offend him, lest he should expel them from their humble homes. The good old minister was horrified at the unbridled temper of the baffled adventurer, and stood apart, looking upon him with awe and fear, and only praying that the maiden might defeat her enemy.

The gate soon gave way at the hinges before the determined assault of the besiegers, and

with a fierce yell of exultation Mr. Anchester sprang into the garden.

At the same moment, however, something suddenly arrested his movements and held him spellbound.

While Mr. Anchester stood gazing, and the other members of the group crowded up behind him to look also, the window of Hellice's chamber was thrown up, and she stood before them. It was Hellice herself, not the helpless, unconscious maiden of a few minutes before, but with a bright and mocking face, all sparkle and animation, all life and beauty, grace, radiance and witchery.

The sight of her thus almost paralysed Mr. Anchester. He had expected to find her cowering and weeping in an inner room. To see her thus, bold, mocking, and defiant, was almost as heavy a blow as the one she had dealt him in the chapel.

"I am sorry for the necessity that has compelled me to be so inhospitable, Mr. Anchester," she said, in pure, clear, ringing tones, sweeter than Christmas chimes, yet full of mockery. "It was very painful to me, of course, to shut you out of your own garden. And truth compels me to say that the house is much better barricaded than the gate was. Come in—if you can!" and she bowed in mock courtesy. "I shall be happy to welcome you to my retreat. Don't hesitate through motives of false delicacy, I entreat you. Come at once, and 'don't stand upon the order' of your coming, to paraphrase a poet. And, by the way, just to encourage you, my dear Mr. Anchester, let me tell you that I was not quite so helpless as you fancied when you took me to the church yonder!"

With a clear, sweet laugh, full of girlish delight at her position as mistress of the affair, Hellice retreated from the window, closing it securely.

"To the main door!" shouted Mr. Anchester, hoarsely, almost frantic with rage at his discomfiture, fancying that the men were laughing at him and secretly sympathising with his escaped victim, and thoroughly aroused to the necessity of capturing the girl without further delay. "Bring anything you can to batter the door in!"

The labourers rushed in various directions to procure the necessary articles for the siege. Sandy crept away into a thicket, that he might not be compelled to render his services.

"Mrs. Hartley," said Mr. Anchester, briefly and sternly to the weeping housekeeper, "keep an eye on the minister! Don't let him leave the place until this business is concluded! The marriage ceremony shall be performed to-day, even if I have to burn the Rookery to the ground to obtain possession of this demon of a girl; she shall smart for this yet—curse her!"

"But Mr. Anchester," cried the woman, wringing her hands, "you said Miss Hellice loved you! If I had suspected the truth I would have set her free hours ago. Poor young creature! Have pity on her, Mr. Anchester. For mercy's sake—"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Anchester, his brows blackening like clouds charged with thunderstorms. "Do as I bid you, and mind your own affairs!"

"I will stay without being watched, my good Mrs. Hartley," said the old minister, gently, and with an expression of terrible anxiety. "It is my duty to protect this poor young girl from this leader in iniquity. I will protect her with my life. So young, so lovely, in such fearful peril—Heaven guard her in this hour of danger!"

Mr. Anchester neither heard nor heeded the good man's closing sentences.

The labourers had returned with instruments that might serve as battering rams, and he led them to their work at once. The main door was chosen as the theatre of operations. The

windows were all too high from the ground to be successfully attacked, protected as they were by heavy wooden shutters. The back doors were equally heavy with the front, without having such broad porticoes to serve as standing-places for the besiegers. The main door was immensely heavy, provided with strong hinges, double locks, and two wooden inside bars, but Mr. Anchester did not despair of breaking it in.

Under his directions a very Babel of sound arose from hammers, stones, and wooden bars. The men dared not do otherwise than work lustily, and Mr. Anchester was not less active than they. At a little distance on the lawn stood the minister and the housekeeper, the one calmly praying, the other moaning and wringing her hands. Sandy peered out from his thicket, his teeth chattering, his eyes dilating, and his face white with woe.

Hellice did not again show her face.

Nearly an hour was spent in vain attempts to break in the door, and Mr. Anchester at last shouted:

"An axe! Bring axes, you rascals! It would take a week to beat the door in! Fetch hatchets and axes!"

These instruments were speedily forthcoming, and brought into active use. The splinters flew in every direction. The hard, old wood for a long time resisted the strokes of the axe, but at last a breach was made, sufficient to admit a hand. Mr. Anchester thrust in his, pushed up the stout bars from their sockets, and the door was soon broken in.

With a savage yell he sprang into the dwelling, bidding the men guard the door against the maiden's escape. He rushed upstairs to Hellice's chamber.

The young girl was not there!

Not in the chamber, nor the adjoining rooms, not in the drawing-room or dining-room, not upstairs nor downstairs, nor anywhere within the house! Mr. Anchester discovered a back window unfastened, and the conviction forced itself upon his mind that she had made her escape by that aperture more than an hour before, and that she had been flying exultantly away from the Rookery all the time that he had been so vainly and uselessly besieging it!

For some time he was literally speechless, but when he gained command of his voice at last it was to order his men to a thorough and instant pursuit of the fugitive!

CHAPTER XLI.

As we have stated, Hellice made her escape from a rear window of the Rookery at the very moment her enemy began his vigorous assault upon the front door. She was cool, clear-headed, and self-reliant, in the full possession of all those powers so necessary to her self-preservation. After making her mocking speech at the window, she withdrew into her chamber, gathered together the few possessions she had brought with her, took her shawl on her arm, and, lamp in hand, rapidly descended the stairs, making her way to the dining-room. Here she paused to collect a few articles of food, which prudence warned her she might require, and to drink a glass of generous wine, which effectually dispelled any languor that might have remained from the drug she had taken. As she replaced the glass upon the buffet there came to her ears the sounds of vigorous pounding and angry command.

"Mr. Darcy Anchester has a task before him that will employ the greater part of an hour at the very least," she said to herself, with a bright and mocking smile. "By the time he effects an entrance I must be very near the station. At any rate, I must have secured my safety!"

She extinguished the light of her lamp, and proceeded quietly through the housekeeper's room to the kitchen. The windows of this latter room were all rather high from the ground, but Hellice's quick wit was ready to supply all deficiencies. She raised the sash cautiously, looked out, perceiving that no one was in the rear garden, and then carefully lowered out a

short step-ladder, usually employed by the housekeeper in reaching otherwise unattainable jars at the top of her closets.

The ladder dropped into a thicket of rose-bushes, but found a firm foothold. The maiden then crept through the window, descended to the ladder, and made her way in safety to the ground.

Her first movement was then to drag the ladder to some distance, and conceal it in the midst of some shrubbery. Her second was to plunge through the dark harel grove, through fields and pastures, until she had gained the road at a point nearly a mile distant from the Rookery, and beyond the rounds of assault; then she sat down by the roadside, under a tree, to decide where she should seek shelter.

She was flushed and excited; her pulse beat quickly, and her heart throbbed like the sound of a muffled drum. She wiped her heated forehead, and gave herself up to quick, calm, clear thoughts.

She believed Mr. Anchester's assertion with regard to the pursuit of unfriendly detectives, and her first decision was to avoid the railway station nearest the Rookery, lest an officer of the law should be waiting for her there—of any other village or station in the neighbourhood, or within many miles, she was profoundly ignorant. She could not appeal to any of the cottagers for protection. To seek shelter in their homes, at the hands of their wives, would be simply useless. No one who owned Mr. Anchester as master would dare to play him false. Besides, these simple valley-labourers were little better than serfs of the soil. To be expelled from their humble homes would be worse than death to them and their families.

Hellice did not entertain the idea of appealing to them for more than an instant. Clearly she must depend upon herself. She saw no way open to her except to keep to the road during the night, and when morning came to seek at some solitary farmhouse a conveyance to some distant town, in which she might hide from all pursuit, Mr. Anchester's included. Her purse was well filled; she was young, strong, and lithe; and her heart was full of strength and hope. Friendless and homeless as she was, she felt that there were conditions worse than friendlessness and homelessness—worse even than a lonely death amid those dreary night solitudes. Better every pang that Fate could bestow than a life as Mr. Anchester's wife—for such a life would be simply a living death.

Hellice sprang up from that wayside stone with a clear, calm brow, and serene, untroubled gaze. She walked along the road with a quick, even step, and the soft summer moonlight fell around her, lighting up her way, and the shadows of the bordering pines fell now and then across her brightness.

There was life in those gloomy trees, life in the bushy thickets, life in the pleasant night air. Birds that are mute by day were calling to each other through the stillness, and, if their songs had no further end, they served to cheer the heart of the young and desolate maiden as she pressed onward.

She was tempted to run at the utmost possible speed, but a wise and thoughtful prudence restrained her steps to a brisk, energetic walk. She knew that she must not exhaust her strength at the outset.

With her light burden scarcely felt, she hurried over the stony road, exultant in her freedom, in her continued right of faithfulness to her only love, and profoundly grateful for the tender and watchful Providence that had prevented the success of Mr. Anchester's artfully-connected designs.

The course she was taking was that which led to the railway station, but it was the girl's intention to turn into a cross road as soon as she had left the valley entirely behind her.

The road was so uneven and stony that the walking soon became difficult to the tenderly-reared maiden. Her delicate boots were not

heavy enough to protect her feet from the obstacles in her path.

The long, steep hill that led up out of the bowl-like valley was very exhaustive to wind and strength, and Hellice was forced repeatedly to sit down and rest. The buoyant strength and lightness that had, in her Indian home, been unimpaired after a night of dancing, was less available here. It was like yoking Pegasus to a plough—the maiden's toiling over that wearisome road.

"Oh, dear! I thought I was so strong!" said the girl, impatiently, as, sitting on a fallen tree near the middle of the hill, she looked down into the gloomy valley. "I need not be troubled, however: I have gained a start that Mr. Anchester cannot lessen."

Satisfied by this reflection, she turned her gaze towards the Rookery. The lights still gleamed from its front windows, but other lights were gleaming from attic and chamber, from parlour and hall, that attested a search throughout the mansion.

It was plain that Mr. Anchester had effected an entrance to the dwelling, and had entered upon a vain search for her.

Hellice laughed gleefully at the thought—with laughter that trickled out in music sweeter than that uttered by the birds.

"He is looking for me!" she said, aloud, watching with bright eyes the lights that danced like will-o'-the-wisps about the mansion. "Now under a couch, I fancy; now behind bed hangings; now in the lumber-attic; now in dress-closets, and now, perhaps, behind boxes and barrels in the store-room. He expects to find me crouching and weeping. He expects to drag me out and frighten me to death with his Blue-beard frowns! He expects also, I dare say, to drug me again before I shall have time to denounce him or attempt to flee. Deluded creature! How he would rave if he could see me sitting three or four miles away laughing at him! I wish some good fairy would only present him with a picture of me at this very moment!"

And again the sweet, girlish laughter bubbled forth. A stranger who could have seen her then, and who knew nothing of the maiden's strangely deep nature, would have thought her the incarnation of childish merriment, and would have wondered that, when she had such great cause for tears, she could laugh so merrily.

But, though Hellice's heart was oppressed with a terrible burden, and though the clouds of sorrow had darkened about her, she was not one to turn her back upon any ray of light or sunshine. Her brave, strong, resolute spirit was always inclined to cheerfulness, and through all her trials, as we have said, she carried in her heart a precious, golden hope, born in her hour of greatest darkness, and shining throughout the changing glooms that followed, like a glorious unfading bow of promise.

She watched the lights as they flickered and faded. She knew that the search was over, that Mr. Anchester realised the fact of her escape.

Still she sat there, desirous to know something of her enemy's next movements. She saw lights flashing over the lawn and through the shrubbery. She saw forms moving through the broken gate and up and down the road. No one approached in the direction in which she had come, and she still felt safe.

The men seemed, most of them, to have proceeded to the little hamlet in the very bottom of the valley, not far from the Rookery, and Hellice fancied that they had relinquished the search, and retired to their homes.

She was destined, however, to be soon undeceived.

For, while she continued to gaze, she saw the men reappear, mounted on their stout farm-horses, and bearing torches that burned luridly and with weird effect.

The little calvacade went back to the Rookery, and Hellice distinguished in the midst of the group a figure taller than the others, which, by its commanding gesticula-

tions with the flaming torch, Hellice knew to be that of Mr. Anchester.

She watched the group until it separated, one half going on that part of the road leading to the seashore, and the remaining half following in her track. The latter party was headed by her enemy.

She arose and continued her journey, keeping in the shade of the trees instead of walking in the middle of the road, as she had done before.

Mr. Anchester's energy and perseverance in pursuit of her had inspired her with new thoughts.

"Why is he so anxious to marry me?" she mused. "It was Cecile whom he loved in India, notwithstanding he denies the fact now. Cecile told me on shipboard that he had promised to follow her as soon as papa's business had all been settled. Why did he seek me out at Holly Bank and offer me his love? He is proud and ambitious, as I well know. It is not in his nature to love nobly and generously. It is not in his nature to marry one who is suspected to be a secret poisoner, unless he could gain greatly by such an alliance. He would consider nothing gain unless it came in the shape of wealth or social position. Would a marriage with me conduce to either?"

She smiled bitterly, placed her shawl on the other arm, and pressed on.

"A marriage with poor Hellice Glintwick would only embarrass him," she said decidedly, answering her own question. "A girl rejected by her kindred, pursued by detectives on a horrible charge, the suspicion of which means life-long disgrace, homeless, friendless, and poor, is not one to exalt him in the eyes of the world. He has some motive besides that in his actions. He has been playing a part. My good sense tells me that. But why? Why should he drug me so that he might marry me, even against my will? What could he gain by it?"

She turned the question over in her mind as she hastened onwards. Her suspicions against Mr. Anchester were active, and every moment's thought gave them fresh strength and intensity, as well as pointed to direct and truthful conclusions.

"I must search for this motive outside of myself," thought the girl. "He was papa's most intimate friend. He watched over papa in his last illness. He was with him when he died. Possibly papa told him which was Lady Redwoode's child and which was his own. Can it be—"

She stopped abruptly, pale and breathless, her eyes glowing like stars, her breath coming and going between her parted lips with frightened rapidity. The hope she had inwardly and secretly cherished, had found words to express itself in her soul. She was bewildered and confused, tremulous with sudden joy, not unmixed with fear and trepidation.

"Can it be?" she repeated, almost shocked at her own audacity.

At that moment fell on her ears the sounds of the near approach of her enemies. Forgetting her suspicions, alive only to her personal danger, she looked around. She could see them plainly, as they passed up the road in the bright moonlight. They were already coming up the hill, and she had not reached its summit. Evidently, they were spurring their steeds, and she would be speedily overtaken if she adhered to her present course. As she arrived at this conclusion a loud shout arose from her pursuers, and she knew that she had been seen.

The shout was re-echoed, and in the exultant sound Hellice detected the savage voice of Mr. Anchester. As it died away, the louder ring of hoofs succeeded, and she knew that her enemies were hurrying on to their prey.

She looked anxiously for an avenue of escape.

On either side of the narrow road was a low, thick growth of trees that clothed the hill and grew low into the valley. Without hesitation, Hellice plunged into the cover of this wood, and concealed herself until her pursuers came

up. She had not long to wait. The little cavalcade soon made its appearance, paused at the spot where she had been seen, and she heard the voice of Mr. Anchester saying:—

"I saw her here myself. She was in a line with that withered tree. She is not to be seen anywhere on the road now. She has taken either to the woods, or is hurrying up the hill under cover of those roadside trees. Her object is to get to the railway. Now, two of you must ride to the station, keeping an eye to the sides of the road. The other two must come with me, and we will beat the wood hereabouts and follow you up. A hundred pounds to the man who secures her and brings her to me! Be cautious, vigilant and watchful. Make no disturbance in the village—but she cannot get there before you! Remember, a hundred pounds to her captor!"

The men assented eagerly, and two spurred on up the road, while two prepared to beat the wood with Mr. Anchester. They knew on which side of the road to look, knowing that Hellice had not crossed the path since they had seen her.

The maiden did not linger in her hiding-place. Conscious of the dangers before her, she turned her steps, and hurried down the hill into the valley. There was no path to guide her. The gloomy trees shut out most of the moonlight. Her way was necessarily circuitous, for the wood was full of thickets, young trees, and bushes. It was easier to descend than to ascend, and she soon left her enemies far behind her. She fled over the ground like a hunted chamois, springing lightly through the clear places, moving more cautiously through the denser shades. She gathered her dress about her waist to protect the silken fabric from injury, mindful even then that it would not be well to appear in a strange place on the morrow in a tattered condition, lest she should bring on herself the scrutiny she desired to avoid.

In this way she skirted the Rookery mansion, and hurried on in a line parallel to the road leading to the seashore. She did not venture out of the shadows of the trees, and it was well that she did not, for, after a time the party that had proceeded in that direction returned homewards, hastening to the aid of Mr. Anchester. She then slackened her pace somewhat, mounted the hill, and sat down to rest upon its top, fatigued beyond all expression.

She had sat there but a little while, when she heard the sound of wheels coming up from the valley. Peering out from her retreat, she beheld the approach of the old chaise and its decrepit motive power. She comprehended that the rickety conveyance had not been despatched in pursuit of her, and a closer scrutiny revealed to her that its occupants were the old minister and Sandy of the Rookery.

"Safe! safe!" she murmured, with a long breath of relief. "That good old man will protect me, I am sure!"

She waited until the vehicle had gained the brow of the hill, and had paused a moment to rest the ancient steed, as was Sandy's usual custom, then she emerged from the shadow so suddenly as to frighten the horse, and to startle the weak-witted lad almost into a fit of hysterics. Her sudden appearance shook the nerves even of the old minister, who had been greatly disturbed by the, to him, unparalleled events of the evening.

"Do not fear, Sandy. It is I!" said Hellice, in her clear, sweet tones.

"Miss Hellice!" gasped the lad, in a tremor of delight. "Is it really Miss Hellice?"

"Really and truly, Sandy," responded the maiden, with a faint smile. "I am safe so far!"

"Thank an over-ruling Providence!" exclaimed the old minister, his pale, thin face lighting up with a glow of thankfulness.

"I suppose you were called to the Rookery, sir, to marry me to Mr. Anchester," said Hellice, addressing the old gentleman. "It is

not necessary for me to tell you that I had been partially drugged, and that I did not entirely arouse from my stupor until the last moment. Mr. Anchester is a villain—an unscrupulous villain! He is searching for me now on the opposite hill. He will scour the valley and the surrounding country. So far I have eluded his search. If left to myself I must inevitably fall into his hands on the morrow. Oh, sir, in the name of the gentle-loving Master whom you serve, I ask your protection!"

"You shall not ask in vain!" said the old minister. "My home and my protection, such as they are, are yours! I am old and feeble, but with what strength I have, I will defend you. Get into the chaise, my child, and you shall soon be in a place of safety."

He alighted with some difficulty, assisted the weary girl to a seat and placed himself beside her, enjoining Sandy to hasten to a place of safety.

"For there's no knowing but they may track the young lady in this direction," he said. "We stole away without permission, and on our way we met several men who insisted on looking into the vehicle, fully persuaded that the maiden was within. Their suspicions may revive. They may turn and follow us!"

Sandy's soul re-echoed these fears, and he whipped his steed so unmercifully that, had the animal been other than the most patient beast in the world, three lives must inevitably have been sacrificed. As it was, the horse permitted itself to be goaded into a revival of its youthful speed, and flew over the ground in a manner that caused the minister now and then to groan in apprehension of a catastrophe.

As to Hellice, she dropped her head on her bosom and fell asleep!

"Poor child!" said the old gentleman, with fatherly kindness, as he looked upon the lovely face and little dark head. "She is wearied to the last verge of exhaustion. She prolonged her flight until her feet were no longer able to sustain her. Poor little creature! It was providential we came upon her as we did, and it will go hard if old Margery Locke and I have not room in house and heart for her! She could not have fallen into better hands!"

He proved the truth of his assertion by caring for her with paternal kindness. He drew her weary head upon his shoulder, folded her shawl about her, and made her position as comfortable as the cramped accommodation would permit. He felt himself amply rewarded for his care, when he saw that the maiden slept on in peaceful, trusting confidence in him, and his old eyes dimmed with tears as he vowed again to himself to protect her with his life.

"There seems to be a mystery about her, Sandy, lad," he said. "Whatever it is, though, I am well assured that she is as innocent and pure as a little child. Do you know ought of her, Sandy?"

"Nothin', sir," replied the lad, surprised and delighted at the minister's declaration. "Why, I said myself there's a mystery about her. She's Miss Hellice—that's all I know, sir."

Having declared what he knew positively, Sandy proceeded to tell what he suspected and surmised, going off into a long rhapsody about Hellice's possible and probable antecedents, borrowing the most improbable features from his favourite romances, and weaving them into one impossible whole. Fortunately, for his tranquillity and self-satisfaction, the good man permitted him to ramble on without heeding or hearing a word he said.

"Mr. Anchester mustn't suspect where Miss Hellice has been taken," concluded the lad. "He'd take her away, sure's anything. Them men at home don't dare go against him; besides, they'd sell themselves for a hunder' pound. A hunder' pound is a mint o' money," he added, explanatorily, for the benefit of the good minister. "So, when I go back to the Rookery, I'll keep my tongue between my teeth. Penal serv—what is it? Oh, servi-

tood for life would't make me tell where Miss Hellice is hidin'."

The minister heard and approved these latter declarations, and took pains to impress upon the mind of the simple lad that the maiden stood in great danger from the designs of her enemy.

While they thus talked and conversed, the chaise took its way along a cross road that ran parallel with the coast, and afterwards turned into another leading down to the sea. At length the travellers approached a small hamlet of simple cottages, mostly occupied by fishermen. At the nearest extremity of the hamlet stood a small stone church, if the unpretending building could be called by that name; and beside the church, in its very shadow, surrounded by an ample garden, stood the old-fashioned manse, the minister's home.

It was a quiet, pleasant place in the soft night-gloom, with its rows of flower-beds, its tiny shrubbery, and ample vegetable garden. The sea was a mile or two distant, but in plain sight. The hamlet was not far from the spot which Hellice had visited that day; and, indeed, the fishermen whose boat she had used attended that little church when they attended any.

"Here we are, my dear!" said the minister, gently arousing Hellice to wakefulness. "You are safe, my child, at the house of old David Locke, the minister, and here comes the old wife to welcome us!"

Hellice sat up, quite awake, and a great deal refreshed by her timely sleep. The minister descended to the ground and helped her out, and Sandy sprang forward and opened the gate for them. At the same moment a stout, pleasant old lady emerged from the dwelling and came down the walk to welcome her husband. She stood in surprise as her gaze fell on Hellice.

"Tut, dame!" said her husband, smiling. "This young lady is in sore trouble, and needs a home and friends. I do not know who she is, nor whence she comes, but it is enough for us to know that she requires our protection and care. She has been sorely persecuted, poor child."

The good dame came forward, looked steadily for an instant into the pure face of the maiden, then stooped silently and gave her a warm kiss of welcome.

"I think I shall be entertaining an angel, and not unawares," she said, with hearty warmth. "Come in, dear child. Come to our hearts as well as our home!"

Hellice, with one of those sweet impulses that made her character so charming, flung her arms around the good dame's neck and kissed her in return. Then she gave her hand to Sandy, thanked him for his devotion to her, and overjoyed him by her gentle gratitude. A moment later the chaise rolled away with its occupant, and the warm-hearted minister, his wife and guest, entered the dwelling.

CHAPTER XLII.

Lady Redwoode did not find a final resting-place in the dreaded pool, as her enemies and the fishermen believed, nor was her fair form resting anywhere beneath the restless waves.

The little boat of which Mr. Forsythe had caught a glimpse as it passed behind an adjacent point of rocks, and the remembrance of which he had so soon lost, that little vessel had borne upon its deck the fainting lady whose death had been so cunningly devised.

She had been preserved from a terrible fate as if by a miracle!

The wind had swept her beyond the projecting headland, completely out of the observation of her enemies. She had been buoyed up by her voluminous skirts, made after the fashion of the day. At first, in the wild whirl of horror and despair, she had given herself up for lost. The discovery that her death had been planned, that the two she had loved and cherished had treacherously plotted against her life, had momentarily paralyzed her. But when she had been borne beyond their view, and had

found herself alone on the water, and had heard the moaning and beating of the surf upon the cruel rocks, a wild instinct of self-preservation awoke within her.

In earlier days she had known how to swim with the ease and dexterity of a mermaid. That knowledge returned to her now in her hour of greatest extremity. She put out her hands under the water, and supported her head above its surface. Then she gave a wild glance over the little bay she had entered, praying for her escape from the yawning jagged rocks, which now and then showed themselves above the surf like the pointed teeth of a huge and deadly submarine monster.

That glance showed her that she was not quite alone in the bay—that a little fishing sloop was close at hand, and bearing down upon her rapidly. That she had been seen by the sloop's solitary occupant was instantly evident, for a rough, strong voice sung out:

"Bear up a minute longer, and you are saved!"

Lady Redwoode strove to reply, but her voice died away in a low, faint moan that seemed to belong to the beating surf. She kept herself afloat by a desperate effort, for she felt her strength gradually slipping from her.

How interminable the moments seemed!

The boat came nearer and nearer. She could hear the flapping of its sail, the creaking of its cords, the movements of its occupant. Its course through the water sounded fearfully loud and distinct, like the rushing of a cataract. The sound of the waves against the rocks grew deafening. Her senses were preternaturally sharpened. It seemed to her that she stood upon the confines of another world.

She closed her eyes wearily, ceased her efforts to support herself in the water, and felt herself sinking beneath the engulfing waves.

And then she was conscious that a strong hand was clutching at her, that she was drawn from the water, that she was laid upon a solid deck. And then light and sound faded alike from her, and she sank into unconsciousness.

She had indeed been rescued from certain death, for in a moment more she would have drifted into the deep Pool, that held tenaciously all that the sea gave it.

Her bonnet and veil, with other articles of wearing apparel, fell off as she was lifted to the deck of the sloop, and floated to the spot that must have inevitably have claimed her body but for this timely rescue.

She lay senseless, motionless, with her streaming hair, her heavy garments, and so fair, so pale, so deadly white, that one would have dreamed her spirit fled.

Her rescuer, the owner of the sloop, was an elderly man, with deep-set eyes, a red face, a bearded chin, dishevelled, uncombed locks, and a fisherman's garb. He had not the look of frankness and honesty. And as he bent over the unconscious lady, and saw the gleam of costly jewels around her throat, on her wrists, and on her fingers, his eyes sparkled greedily, and an avaricious look overspread his features.

"A regular prize!" he muttered. "She's dead, sure enough, but them stones on her are worth more'n all I ever saw in my life. They're enough to make a man rich, to give him a whole fleet o' smacks, and to let him lay off at his ease on shore, while other fellows do his work. I am the luckiest chap! Just my luck to be so near the capsize, to see this lady, and to pick her up. Wonder if anybody saw me!"

He looked seaward at the fishing vessels that were hurrying to Mr. Forsythe's aid. He was partly shielded from their view by the pointed rocks. A moment's survey convinced him that his rescue of Lady Redwoode had been unobserved.

Exultant in his prize, and anxious only to creep away unseen, he adjusted his sail to the shifting wind, and moved up the coast, disappearing finally around the headland, as we have described.

When he had gained the greater security of a second bay, more sheltered than the first, he did not relax his speed or his care of the vessel, contenting himself with bestowing an occasional glance upon his unconscious guest.

That she was dead he really believed. He feasted his eyes upon the jewels that shone on her cold, white hands, and chuckled to himself over his great prize, over the probable astonishment and delight of his wife, and over his prospective ease and wealth.

The boat sped on, now faster, now slower, as the wind permitted, until the fisherman had placed at least three miles of coast between him and the scene of the recent disaster. At that time he found himself at the entrance of a narrow cove, and he headed into it, making directly towards the shore.

There was a strip of white beach, two or three decaying row-boats turned bottom up to the sun, and but little more than half-way beyond the reach of the waves a ruined boat-house, and directly at the back of all these stood a small cobble-stone cottage.

This was the fisherman's home.

There were no other houses to be seen in the vicinity. There was a village half a mile distant, and this cottage was like an outpost or sentinel.

A woman stood in the open door, shading her eyes from the sun by holding her hand above her brows. She was large and heavily built, with a brown face, brown hands, and a weather-beaten look. Evidently she was used to sharing her husband's toils on the sea, and her coarse attire was well-suited to her mode of life.

She waited until the sloop came very near the shore and anchored, then she walked down to the beach, looking curiously at the senseless figure upon the deck.

"What's that?" she demanded, in a rough voice.

The fisherman made a gesture command-

ing silence, and looked cautiously towards the dwelling.

"There's no one there, Rills," declared the woman, impatiently. "What ails you? Have you got a good haul?"

"A precious good haul!" returned the fisherman, lifting the form of Lady Redwoode in his arms, and descending with it into a small boat that he had just let down into the water. "It's a drowned woman, Jane."

"Is she dead?"

"Yes!" was the reply, as Rills rowed ashore, and sprang out upon the beach. "Heave ahead now. Ask no questions till we've got the door locked atween us and t' outside."

The woman restrained her curiosity sufficiently to obey. She proceeded in advance to the cottage, and flung open the door of an inner room, the dwelling being divided into two chambers. The fisherman followed in her steps, and laid down his burden upon a clean but humble couch, while his wife hastened to bar the outer door.

"There's our fortin!" declared the fisherman, pointing to the insensible figure of the Baroness, when his wife returned. "I saved the lady just as she was a' sinkin'. Look at them dimons on her, Jane. They've got money enough in 'em to make a lady o' you."

"What, them bits o' shining stones!" cried the woman, in astonishment, raising the lady's hand and staring at the gems thereon.

"Yes, them bits o' stones!" asserted Rills, triumphantly. "I ain't been a sailor for nothin', Jane. I ain't been to Brazil, and Injy, and all them places for nothin'. I know what dimons are. Look at them about her throat. See 'em shine! Ain't they beauties?"

The woman, somewhat incredulous, essayed to examine the brooch so greatly admired by her husband. As she moved her hand towards the lady's throat she detected a faint fluttering under the bodice, a sign of Lady Redwoode's returning consciousness.

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"Why, she ain't dead!" she exclaimed, retreating a step.

"Not dead!" repeated Rills, angry at the declaration. "Yes, she is dead. And as soon as I can strip off them 'ere jewels, she'll be buried, too. I'm goin' to carry her out to sea to-night—"

"I tell you she is alive!" interrupted the woman, observing a faint contraction of the lady's hands. "Go into the other room, Rills. The lady's in a faint-like, an's no more drowned than I am!"

She pushed her husband out of the chamber, and devoted herself to her guest's recovery. Coarse and rough as she was, she moved with a gentle touch and kind-heartedness that wealth and breeding could not excel.

The lady's rare and glorious beauty looked so like that of a superior being. With a reverent hand she loosened the clinging garments, wrung out the heavy, dripping hair, chafed the cold limbs, and administered hot draughts of whisky—a sovereign remedy for all ills in that, as in many other humble households.

The result of her ministrations was the restoration of the lady to life and consciousness. The heavy eyelids lifted themselves feebly, the pale face expressed surprise and inquiry, and the feeble voice murmured:

"Saved! Saved! I thought I was drowning!"

"You are on shore and in safe hands, lady," said the fisherman's wife, earnestly, endeavouring to tune her rough voice to softer cadences.

Lady Redwoode smiled faintly, endeavoured to speak again, but passed away into a second faintness, from which she was at length aroused by her volunteer nurse to the delirium of fever.

"She's goin' to be dreadful ill, I'm afraid," said the woman, aloud, as she looked pityingly upon her guest. "I know what to do though, an' she might 'a had a worse nurse than I am."

She lifted the Baroness to a rude bench that stood against the wall, and proceeded to make up the bed anew with great care, producing from a rude oaken chest linen that she had spun before her marriage, and which she reckoned as her choicest treasure. She then divested the lady of her wet garments, putting upon her a clean though coarse night-dress, and laid her among the pillows, covering her as carefully as though she had been an infant.

She then went into the outer room, where her husband awaited her in moodiness and gloom.

"The lady is alive and likely to get well," she said, coming to his side. "She's got a fever now that may throw her back some time, but it's my opinion she'll come out all right."

"What's her name?" demanded Rills, sullenly, with the air of one who considered himself defrauded.

"I don't know. She ain't in her right mind. But she's some great lady, as them dimons prove."

"True. Where are the dimons?"

"I've put 'em away," said the woman, firmly. "They are 'ere, out o'urn, Rills. I shall save 'em for her against she gets well. Now you must go and let her friends know she's livin'—"

"I can't. What excuse can I make for runnin' off with her?" demanded the fisherman. "They'll rest me for rob'ry. I sha'n't go nigh 'em. She may die yet, and what's the use o' harrerin' up their feelings? If she dies, the dimons will be urn. There ain't no use o' askin' me to tell her friends, Jane, till we see if she lives."

The woman was unable to prevail against this decision, and at last reluctantly acquiesced in it.

(To be continued next week.)

(This story commenced in No. 2021. Back numbers can be obtained through any news-agent.)

THE EXACTING HUSBAND.

A man who expects his wife to conform to his likes and dislikes, because he deems himself a being of vastly superior mould, is very likely to soon find himself in serious trouble. She may devotedly love him, and sincerely respect him, but it will be impossible to so change her nature that from the day of her marriage she will see with his eyes and admire only what he admires. It is the natural right of every wife to lavish her affections upon many objects, instead of concentrating them upon one amiable husband. There are, for example, her own relatives and her bosom friends of other days. Few things are more contemptible than the narrow and jealous affection which supposes that love for many friends is inconsistent with a dominant love for one's life mate. This absurdity is most frequently seen in newly-married people. One or other seems to think that every glance given elsewhere is a glance lost. No word is more abused than "mine." The selfish, exacting man who would concentrate on himself all his wife's thoughts and interest, forgets that he is dwarfing her nature by his demand. It is the woman who "loveth best all things, both great and small," who will most wisely and truly love her husband. Leave your wife the freedom of heart and sympathy which she had when she preferred you, if you would have her preserve the generosity of heart that is natural to her. Why, some men are even jealous of the love felt for their own children, so wholly would they keep their wives to themselves as private worshippers! Because a woman has chosen a man from all mankind as her life's mate, that cannot in common-sense be regarded as a reason for cramping her family and social affections and making her regard the domestic circle as an all-sufficient world.

The same truth applies in the case of a wife's aspirations and tastes. The thoughtless, selfish, conceited husband may attempt to mould his wife exactly to his will. It is hardly possible

to imagine a worse slavery than that endured by a woman who is expected to focus all her thoughts and affections on her husband, to strive to mould her wishes, and thoughts, and admiration, and aims in accord with his. Such treatment of a wife is absolutely inimical to the preservation in her of that independent personality which will leave her permanently fresh, attractive, and, in brief, herself, instead of being a very poor replica of a short-sighted man. To be herself, a wife must develop her own tastes and acknowledge the power of her own aspirations.

Naturally a husband and wife will have great influence upon each other by mere constant association and tender admiration. He will lead her thoughts into the meditative byways where his own stray. He may infect her with some of his ambition, which she, in turn, will teach him to tone down with tact and discretion. Husband and wife must react upon each other powerfully if each has a distinct individuality, and, tempered by love, such interchange of influences will be wholly for good. But the conceited man who takes his own character and peculiarities as the products of a flawless mould and tries to shape his wife's personality accordingly, has utterly misread the purposes of marriage, and does not understand the conditions of human happiness.

HOW OLD IS A CHINAMAN?—A Chinaman has no beard, and his hair is of a jet and glossy blackness, which only turns gray at an extreme age, when a Caucasian head would be either snow-white or bald. Then, again, the Chinese have the most perfect nervous system of any people in the world. So you have little to go by. A Chinaman will look thirty when he is twenty and when he is fifty. If you ask him his age he will place it at least ten years ahead, for he holds old age to be honourable, and among his people he will be respected and looked up to by all his juniors.

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Facetiæ

"You can say what you choose about Mr. Parvenu, but I think he is a man of the finest polish." "Well, he ought to be. He spent the first fifteen years of his life blacking boots."

SHE: "And what have you ever done to prove your love to me?" He: "Done! Why, I have done without my lunch every day for a week in order to take you to the theatre last night!"

"Well," said Snaggs, "I think many dogs have more sense than their masters." "Yes," chimed in Craggs, "I have a dog like that myself." And yet he couldn't make out why they laughed.

"That fortune-teller said if I paid her a crown she would reveal to me why I don't get rich." "Did you give it to her?" "Yes; and she told me I had a great weakness for throwing away money."

DUDLEY: "Do you think Miss Elderkin is serious in her intentions regarding me?" Chumleigh: "You bet I do." Dudley: "Well, now, honestly, do you think she means matrimony or adoption?"

CHOLLY: "She's to let me know at the end of a week if she accepts me." Johnny: "It must be a terrible suspense." Cholly: "Rather! I don't know whether to break off my other engagements or not."

ENAMOURED SWAIN (after being accepted): "Darling, you look sweet enough to eat." Practical Maid: "Well, you can just bet that I do eat. I hope you didn't think that I lived on atmosphere alone."

A BRIGHT little girl, who had unsuccessfully spelled the word "that," was asked by her teacher what would remain after the "t" had been taken away. "The dirty cups and saucers," was the prompt reply.

ANOTHER VIEW OF THE CASE.—"Do you think that Shakespeare wrote all the things that are credited to him?" "Well," answered Miss Priscilla Prymme, "if he pretends to be a gentleman, I should hope not!"

WORK FOR THE INVENTOR.—"Here's an invention that enables you to see the man who rings you up over the telephone." "That's well enough. But what is really needed is something that will enable you to punch him in the jaw."

EXCUSED.—Employer: "How does it happen that you are so late, Mr. M.?" Salesman: "The train on the London, Chatham and Dover was late, sir." Employer: "But you don't live on that line." Salesman: "No, but if I did I should have been a good deal later."

WHAT COMMONSENSE WOULD HAVE DONE.—"You'd make a pretty good clerk," said the employer, sarcastically, "if you only had a little more commonsense." "Indeed!" replied the clerk. "But did it ever occur to you that if I had a little more commonsense I wouldn't be a clerk at all?"

MRS. QUAREL sat looking into the fire. Presently she chuckled a little bit. "What are you giggling at?" kindly inquired Mr. Quarrel. "I was thinking of the time when you proposed. You told me to say that one little word that would make you happy for life." "Yes, I remember. And you went and said the wrong word."

SOME time ago a number of policemen were assembled at headquarters for the purpose of being examined in matters relating to police duty previous to being appointed as sergeants. The following question was asked a candidate by a member of the examining board: "You are on duty in the vicinity of a menagerie, and you are informed that a lion has broken loose and is roaming about the streets. What steps would you take?" "Pretty long steps, sir!" replied the "cop," to the amusement of the other members of the board.

STYLE IN VEHICLES.—Dealer: "I am sure, madam, you could look the city through and not find a handsomer carriage than this." Mrs. D'Arno: "Oh, it's handsome enough; but it looks too comfortable to be stylish."

OVERHEARD AT HOTEL IN CALAIS.—American lady just arrived, and having lost all her luggage, turns to a gentleman near her, and remarks: "You know it is not the direct blows of Providence I mind, but these collateral slaps."

DR. PILLSBURY: "Well, Mr. Sceptic, did you follow my prescription?" Sceptic: "No. If I had I would have broken my neck." Dr. Pillsbury: "Why, what do you mean?" Sceptic: "I threw the prescription out of the window."

DAISY LUGGS: "Why, bless me, Amy, what new fad is this? Your sleeves are rolled up and you're covered with flour!" Amy Hamone: "Oddest fad in the world, my dear; I've taken a notion to help my mother in the kitchen!"

"But before I can admit of your paying your addresses to my daughter," said the father, "I must know the extent of your debts. Come, now, tell me what you owe?" "In that case, sir," said the suitor, "will you kindly permit me to take a chair?"

MR. CHEATSIDE: "I thought you said you were going to Mrs. Brick's five o'clock tea this afternoon. It's after five now." Mrs. Cheat-side: "There's no hurry. Her five o'clock tea isn't likely to be ready before seven. She's got the girl I used to have."

MISS JOY (pupil at a ladies' college): "Madam, Mr. Foster has come to take me for a drive. May I go?" "You know, Miss Joy, the rules of the college do not allow it unless you are engaged. Are you engaged to Mr. Foster?" Miss Joy (doubtfully): "N-no, but—if you will let me go I shall be by the time we get back."

SCRATCHED.—Smith: "Johnson was in a terrible railway accident yesterday." Jones: "You don't say so. Was he much injured?" "No; fortunately he escaped with only a few scratches on his face." "Lucky fellow! Where did it happen?" "In the tunnel." "In the tunnel?" "Yes; he kissed the wrong girl. Good-morning!"

ETHEL: "Oh, at last! It has been years, Alphonse, since I saw you." Alphonse: "Oh, my own Ethel, it has been centuries." Ethel's Father (up in the library): "Maggie, who was that you just let in?" Maggie: "It was Mr. Cumlotts, sir." Ethel's Father: "Great guns, this is the ninth time he's been here this week. He might as well live here."

A SELF-ACTING SOFA, just large enough for two, has been invented. If properly wound up it will begin to ring a warning bell just before ten o'clock. At one minute after ten it splits apart, and while one-half carries the daughter of the house upstairs, the other half kicks the young man out of doors. They will be expensive, but people must have them.

THE COUNTRY HOUSE. (What our architect has to put up with).—Fair Client: "I want it to be nice and baronial, Queen Anne and Elizabethan, and all that—kind of quaint and Nuremberg, you know—regular Old English, with French windows opening to the lawn, and Venetian blinds, and sort of Swiss balconies, and a loggia. But I'm sure you know what I mean!"

YARSLAY: "See here, Wickwire, you are a married man, and ought to know something about the ways of women. I want to ask your opinion on a little matter." Wickwire: "Well?" "I was calling on a young lady last evening—no, I didn't say what her name was—and along about 11.30 she began asking me about my favourite breakfast dishes. I'd like to know whether she was hinting towards housekeeping, or intimating that it was time for me to go home."

Shot through the Head.

A pretty nurse had barely left the porch of the hospital where she was engaged the other day and turned along the street, when a sharp pain shot right through her head. She at once knew that a bad headache was coming on, and being a young lady of experience in medicines knew also that the proper preventive was Bile Beans for Biliousness. Stepping into the nearest shop she purchased a box, and thus escaped the terrors of headache. If you suffer from headache, indigestion, bad breath, heartburn, palpitation, or any disorder of the liver and digestive system, follow the nurse's example and take a few doses of Bile Beans. They will ensure you plenty of energy and that delicious sensation of strength and vivacity which only the enjoyment of perfect health can give. They are also a certain remedy for pimples, skin eruptions, and blotches, as the following case will show.

In the Somerset village of Washford live Mr. and Mrs. George Denbury, whose daughter Bessie has been most marvellously cured by Bile Beans for Biliousness. "For over three years," said Mrs. Denbury to a *Somerset County Express* reporter, "Bessie was dreadfully disfigured with an outbreak of pimples and skin blotches. First of all they appeared all over her face, and then quickly spread until her whole body was covered."

"Yes," interposed Bessie, whose bright, sparkling eyes and clear complexion now denote perfect health. "I was so bad that I never liked to be seen in public. My face was completely disfigured, my mouth was drawn all on one side. The flesh was lumpy and discoloured. The pimples enlarged and burst like gatherings, causing fearful pain. More than once I have been in such agony that I have fainted away. Often I have been unable to hold myself up; so weak and sickly did I become. I had only a poor appetite, and felt disinclined to go in for exercise. It was an utterly wretched feeling that overwhelmed me. No one can really understand the acute nature of my case."

"We had medicine supplied from a chemist," broke in Mrs. Denbury, "but Bessie's ailment was so serious that he could not do her the least good. We tried various measures, which were equally unavailing; and the case had apparently grown hopeless when our attention was drawn to the fact that Bile Beans had been found extremely beneficial in like cases. Bessie sent for some, and was so relieved in general health by them that she obtained a larger supply. It was not very long before I noticed a remarkable improvement in her appearance. Little by little the swellings and blotches became less, the gatherings healed and to-day, so far from being troubled at all with pimples or any other disfigurements, her whole skin is absolutely clear. She also feels as different again in health and spirits, being able to eat and sleep well, and take exercise like anyone of her age should. Her recovery is indeed a relief, and we have only Bile Beans to thank for it."

Bile Beans for Biliousness are unequalled for face sores, pains in the back and chest, and all stomach and liver disorder, palpitation, anæmia, female ailments, constipation, piles, kidney complaint, loss of appetite, nausea, rheumatism, fulness after eating, and nervous and general debility, and the host of ailments arising out of impurity of the blood and loss of vital force. Obtainable of all chemists, or post free for price one and three halfpence or two and nine from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 and 120, London Wall, E.C. Bile Beans are sold only in sealed boxes; never loose.

"You say that all dreams are due to something influencing the sleeper at that particular moment. How do you account for my dreaming the other night that I was dead?" "Probably your room was too hot."

Society

ALTHOUGH mourning for Queen Victoria is nominally over, the King and Royal Family are still using black-edged notepaper.

THE cloth of gold for the pallium of the Royal mantle, which the King will wear at the Coronation, is now finished, and has been sent from the loom at Braintree to the Royal School of Needlework. In form, the mantle is made four square, and is buckled in front, something after the manner of an episcopal cope.

Nor everyone who is entitled to be present at the Coronation will take advantage of their rights. Quite a number of peeresses, but chiefly dowager peeresses, are likely to be missing. Some may possibly be frightened away by the fact that only sixteen inches of space is being allowed for each person, not a very liberal allowance when the warm weather and the thick velvet robes are considered.

VERY many and quaint are the anecdotes told of little Prince Edward of York. One of these goes to relate how he and his little brother had been tired out listening to some bore, who, by way of amusing them in his own style (not the style of small boys), was telling them some lengthy story. At the conclusion, Prince Edward, in his little Royal way, turned to his small brother, who by yawning and becoming restless was showing his feelings too plainly, and simply said "Smile!"

It is to be expected that on the occasion of the Coronation all the peers who possess them should arrive in their state coaches. The Duke and Duchess of Somerset are having a splendid one built, and others, like the Duke of Norfolk, are having those they already possess regilded and varnished. It is necessary on these state occasions to have four footmen in livery at the back of each coach, and it is likely, with such a big demand pending, that tall footmen also horses will be at a premium, for these great coaches also require horses quite seventeen hands high. The expense entailed is enormous, and has been calculated at the least at some two thousand pounds.

DURING the absence of the Prince and Princess of Wales from York House advantage has been taken of the opportunity thoroughly to clean and redecorate it. The Prince and Princess's own apartments will also be painted and beautified. York House will continue to be their town residence until at least the end of the year, and in the meantime Marlborough House, which is actually more or less dismantled, will remain vacant. It is not, and has never been intended, to use it during the Coronation for the housing of the King's guests. The staff will, indeed, on the King's entry into residence at Buckingham Palace, be transferred to the new Royal establishment, where it will undergo rearrangement.

ONE of the prettiest anecdotes related of Royalty is that telling how the King first saw a portrait of his future wife. He was whiling away a summer's afternoon with some friends of his own age, one of whom had recently become engaged to be married, and this gentleman drew from his pocket a portrait, which his friends at first imagined to be his fiancée. It was the picture of a young girl simply dressed in a white frock, a band of black velvet round her fair throat, and her hair smoothed back from the brows, revealing a face of great loveliness. The Prince, as he then was, desired to know who the beautiful ingénue might be, and received for answer: "The daughter of Prince Christian of Denmark."

PRINCESS MARGARET OF CONNAUGHT is the one of Queen Victoria's granddaughters who most resembles her. The few living con-

temporaries of that august lady declare that the young Princess is an exact replica of Her Majesty at the same age of "sweet and twenty." Princess "Daisy" and Princess "Patsy," as the sisters are called at home, have been most carefully brought up. As little girls they were kept more closely to their lessons than are even the majority of Royal children, and for that reason have thrown off the restraint of the schoolroom with more than the usual delight. Everybody who knows Princess Margaret loves her. She is so fresh, bright, and eager.

A CHARMING story is told of the King which illustrates at once the kindness of his heart and the thorough way in which he supervises everything. After the first Court was held at Buckingham Palace great quantities of dainty foods, jellies, chickens, and the like were left, and the King instructed his equerry to communicate with one of the London hospitals, putting the supplies at the disposal of the doctors if they thought any, or all, of it could be used for the patients. One of the hospital doctors arranged to go down to the Palace at once to make an inspection. Upon arrival there, we are told, he was taken to the Royal kitchens, where his amazement can be better imagined than described at finding the King himself among the pots and pans, enthusiastically superintending the arrangement of the delicacies for the medical inspection. Under his kindly eye the doctor was able to collect baskets of good things for the poor sufferers.

THE Ministers and the Great Officers of the Household will give full-dress dinners on Friday, May 30, "to celebrate His Majesty's Birthday," and it is understood that there will be a reception afterwards, either at Devonshire House or at the Foreign Office, which will be attended by the Prince and Princess of Wales and other members of the Royal Family. The King and Queen will give a Royal dinner party at Buckingham Palace. The date of the Coronation Naval Review has been altered from Tuesday, July 1, to Saturday, June 28, simply in the interests of the Houses of Parliament.

THE Infanta Eulalie of Spain, who is again in England, is one of the warmest of this country's foreign admirers. She has given proof of this by having her two sons, Prince Adolphus and Prince Louis Fernando, educated in England, and it was to pass the Easter vacation with her boys that the Infanta came over. She is a daughter of Queen Isabella of Spain, and consequently aunt of the young King, at whose Coronation she will assist after a stay in Paris on her return from this country. The Spanish Princess was not happy in her marriage with Prince Antoine, whom she divorced.

MY LOYAL KNIGHT

Oh, who shall I find waiting
When the apple blossoms blow;
And who will run to meet me,

As in the long ago;
And who will gently clasp my hand
In simple, fond delight?
Who could it be, oh, eager heart,
Except my loyal knight?

My loyal knight who left me
When the skies were dull and gray,
But who will soon be back again,

For he is on his way;
And over hills and valleys,
And through glens of misty light,
Roll safely, wheels, and bring to me
My handsome, loyal knight.

No queen upon her gilded throne;
No princess proud and great,
Can claim a happier heart than mine
Through all this world's estate.

And who the joy of meeting,
In the springtime's golden light,
And hear the loving voice again
Of him, my loyal knight.

CORRECT BREATHING

Few women breathe correctly, and the habit of half-filling the lungs causes the dizziness which accompanies an unaccustomed amount of oxygen taken into the lungs at rare intervals. Correct breathing must be learned by care and practice. Incorrect breathing weakens the lungs, offering favourable conditions for disease. The remedy for the evil is in conscious breathing, exercising the lungs systematically. Open a window and stand by it for several minutes each day, inhaling a little deeper each time, filling the lungs slowly and exhaling quickly, repeating by slow, deep, and thorough movements. One never takes cold while breathing deeply, so have no fear of the open window, even if the weather be cold or wet. Only be sure that the mouth is closed and the air passes through the nostrils first so as to be warmed by the time it reaches the lungs. Repeat this exercise regularly, and the result will be that the lungs may be filled at any time without any unpleasant sensation. Another exercise which has been tried with great benefit is to stand with your shoulders resting against a wall, rise upon tiptoes, each time breathing deeply and exhaling quickly. Repeat ten or twelve times several times a day.

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Helpful Talks

BY THE EDITOR.

The Editor is pleased to hear from his readers at any time.

All letters must give the name and address of the writers, not for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith.

STUDENT.—The pulse of an adult in good health beats from seventy to eighty a minute. 2. No charge is made for information or advice imparted in this column.

R. A. T.—You may be able to alter the shape of your pug dog's nose and otherwise change its appearance to your satisfaction after killing it; not before.

ANGIE.—The so-called "Gretna Green" was Port Patrick, a seaport town of Scotland, the nearest point to Ireland, where runaway couples from the "Emerald Isle" bent on matrimony formerly used to fly to have the knot tied.

A. P. M. (Braintree).—According to the various celebrations of a marriage, in vogue for many years, the fourteenth anniversary of a wedding has never been observed. You probably refer to the "fifteenth" anniversary, which is styled the "crystal" or "glass wedding."

TWENTY-YEARS READER.—To say "you and me" is correct, when used in the objective case, as: "He will take you and me to the concert." If used in the nominative case it should be "You and I," as: "You and I will go to the concert with him."

YOUNG HOPEFUL.—You will find the occupation of window-dressing a remunerative one, provided you have the requisite taste and talent for that art, and after becoming proficient in it can secure employment in one of the larger cities.

J. G. B.—"Bill Sikes" is a brutal thief and housebreaker portrayed in Dickens' famous novel, "Oliver Twist." Sikes murders his companion, Nancy, and in trying to lower himself by a rope from the roof of the building where he had taken refuge from the pursuit of the crowd, falls, and is choked in a noose of his own making.

GIRLIE.—1. Etiquette gives no rule as to which arm a gentleman should offer a lady when ascending a flight of stairs. Ladies seem generally to prefer to take the gentleman's left arm with the right hand. 2. The manner of attaching a message to a carrier pigeon is to place a small letter, written on the finest of thin paper, lengthwise under one wing or fastened to the leg.

M. C. (Dover).—It is customary when visiting a relative for her to introduce you to any visitors who may be there, provided the meeting does not take place at a formal function where introductions are dispensed with.

ANXIOUS.—The objection made by physicians and others against the marriage of first cousins is that the offspring of those so nearly related are apt to be either physically or mentally deformed, or both. As this misfortune does not follow in all cases many assume the risk.

H. Y. T.—Excessive perspiration of the hands may be checked by the application of an infusion of white oak bark several times a day. To whiten your hands, apply a lotion three times a day, composed of citric acid, five grains; glycerine and rose water, one ounce each.

MRS. G.—There is no method by which you can make the hair gray, I am sorry to say, since you explain that you wish it for business reasons, that would not totally destroy the constitution of the hair. It is claimed by some specialists that plastering the hair all over the head with the beaten yolk of an egg will produce grayness, but I have little faith in the process.

JEANETTE.—You are an exception not to care for skin foods, for in connection with massage they are excellent promoters of beauty. You might try something else, however, and I give you the recipe for a very effective preparation. When you take your bath throw into the water a mixture composed of 200 grains each of strong vinegar, tincture of benzoin, and tincture of red roses. This will harden the flesh and keep it firm, if used regularly.

E. V. E. R. (Bangor).—Letters of introduction should never be sealed, for the reason that the person named in them should know their contents. 2. The term "classical music" is only applied to compositions of the highest authority and excellence, as the works of such composers as Handel, Haydn, Beethoven, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Wagner, etc. The cheap c'ap-trap music to which you refer finds no place in the higher class of composition.

A CONSTANT READER.—Everything connected with a "silver wedding" should partake as far as possible of the appearance of silver, as decorations, table service, etc. 2. Souvenirs would be in keeping with the occasion, and should be suggestive of silver. They need not be of an expensive character. 3. The reception of the guests and the articles served at supper, except for table decorations, differ in no wise from the usual forms observed at any home party or reception.

HOUSEWIFE.—To remove mildew stain from white goods put a teaspoonful of chloride of lime in about a quart of water and let stand until dissolved. Strain and dip the mildewed articles in this solution and place in the sun. Continue this process until the stains are out.

H. MARTIN.—The young lady's parents are right; she is too young to become engaged. A girl of fifteen can have no proper conception of love or matrimony. If your affection for her is of the enduring sort, you can easily bring your mind to the point of waiting a year or two before again pressing your suit. Your fear that rivals may spring up if the engagement is long delayed is quite natural, but if you are a bright young man you will keep a sharp lookout in that direction and ward them all off.

JOHN HENRY.—Your father is right, there have been several Germans of the name of Hoffman or Hoffmann distinguished for their medical knowledge. Moritz Hoffman, born in 1621, at Furstenwalde, who was an eminent professor of anatomy, botany, and physics, and the discoverer of the pancreatic duct—Friedrich Hoffman, the most celebrated of the name, born in 1660, at Halle, Saxony, who made many discoveries of great benefit to the medical profession, and wrote a number of valuable works. The August Hoffmann to whom your father refers was a distinguished chemist, born at Geissen, in 1818.

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